



Malory Towers - 03

Third Year at Malory Towers

By
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1 A NEW GIRL FOR MALORY TOWERS

DARRELL was busy helping her mother to pack her clothes to take back to board school. Her little sister Felicity was watching, wishing that she too was going with her. 'Cheer up, Felicity!' said Darreli. 'You'll be coming back with me in September. V' 'I hope so,' said her mother. 'Miss Grayling said she thought she would have room for me.' 'Mother, I do!' said Darreli. 'And do let me take back my roller-skates. We're allowed to skate round the courtyard now. It's such fun.'

'All right,' said Mrs. Rivers. 'But it means unpacking half the trunk, because they —did we mark your new bedroom slippers?'

'No!' groaned Darreli. 'Felicity, be a darling and mark them for me. Matron absolutely refused to let me go. Felicity darted off to get a pen. She was eleven and Darreli was fourteen. How should I wish we hadn't got to call for that new girl,' said Darreli, bent over her trunk. 'V' 'Zerelda,' said her mother. 'Zerelda Brass.'

'Golly!' said Darreli. 'Zerelda! Whatever will she be like?'

'Oh, all right, I expect,' said Mrs. Rivers. 'She's American, you know. But her Eng

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here for a year, and she's to go to Malory Towers. It's a marvel they were able to
'What's she like?' asked Darrell. 'Have you seen her?'

'No. Only a photograph,' said Mrs. Rivers. 'She looked about twenty there! But sh
'Fifteen! Then she won't be in my form,' said Darrell. 'She'll be in one higher up. I
Sally Hope was Darrell's best friend at school. Usually they arrived together at M
'You'll have to write and tell her everything,' said Mrs. Rivers. 'Oh, thank you, Fe
—you've marked the slippers beautifully. Have you put in your bed-
jacket, Darrell? Oh yes, there it is. Well, now we're really getting on. Where's the
'If Sally hadn't been in quarantine we wouldn't have had to call for Zerelda,' said I
'Good gracious—

can't you talk about Malory Towers?' said her mother. 'You seem to be able to tal
At last the packing was all done. Then there was the usual hunt for the key of the
'Have you signed my health certificate. Mother?' asked Darrell. 'Where is it? In m
case? Right. I wonder if Irene will have got hers safely this term?'

Felicity giggled. She loved hearing about the harum-
scarum Irene who always started off safely with her health certificate, and could r

Darrell's father was driving her mother and Darrell down to Malory Towers the n
bye to everything, even the hens!

'I shan't have to say good-

bye to you in September, Felicity,' said Darrell. 'Well, good-

bye, now, and just see you get on well in games this term, so that I can be proud c
They were off at last, purring away down the road to the West Country. It was a l
Zerelda lived in a big house about fifty miles along the way. Her grandmother ha
'I think it would be so nice if she and Darrell could have a good long talk about th
But Darrell didn't feel very pleased about it. She was disappointed that they could
'Here's Notting,' said Mr. Rivers, seeing the name on a signpost. 'This is where w
'Yes,' said Mrs. Rivers, looking at a card in her hand. 'Turn to the right by the chu

'That's where Zerelda is living.'

They soon drew up at a big white house, almost a mansion. A butler opened the door. 'This is kind of you!' she said. 'Zerelda! Are you ready? Here they are.'

No Zerelda appeared. Mrs. Rivers said they wouldn't come in and have coffee, as 'If Zerelda is ready, we'll set off straight away,' said Mr. Rivers. He felt a little annoyed. 'Zerelda! Come at once!' called her grandmother. She turned to the butler. 'Do you see her?' It was some minutes before Zerelda appeared. And when she did arrive Darrell could hardly stare. Who was this? She looked like somebody out of the films. And, going to her, he couldn't be Zerelda. This girl looked about twenty. She came forward with a laugh. 'Oh! Zerelda! Where were you?' said her grandmother. 'You've kept us waiting.' 'Sorry,' drawled Zerelda. Her grandmother introduced her to the Rivers family. Mr. Rivers —and he didn't like the look of this Zerelda much!

Neither did Darrell. In fact, she felt quite alarmed. Zerelda must be seventeen or eighteen.

'You'd better put on your school hat,' said her grandmother, handing it to Zerelda.

'What! Wear that terrible thing!' said Zerelda. 'Gee, Gran'ma, I never shall!'

Darrell didn't dare to say that she would certainly have to. She was quite tongue-tied. Zerelda seemed really grown-up to her. It wasn't only her looks, and the way she talked —it was her self-confident manner, and her grown-up way of talking.

She slid gracefully into the seat by Darrell. 'Now, Zerelda, you remember you're going to see Mr. Rivers, feeling that talk between Zerelda and her grandmother would probably end in a firm bye!' said Mrs. Rivers, feeling that they might stay there for ever if she didn't firm it up.

The car moved off. Zerelda's grandmother was left still talking at top speed in the car. 'Have you got enough rug?' Darrell asked politely.

'Yes, thanks,' said Zerelda. There was a silence. Darrell racked her brains to think of something to say. 'Would you like me to tell you something about Malory Towers?' she asked Zerelda. 'Go ahead, honey,' said Zerelda, rather sleepily. 'Spill the beans. What's our class-teacher like?'

'Well—you won't be in my class, because you're fifteen.'

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aren't you?' said Darrell.

'Nearly sixteen,' said Zerelda, patting the big roll on the top of her head. 'No, I guess I'm as big as anyone else in my form,' said Darrell, and she thought to herself that she began to talk about Malory Towers. It was her favourite subject, so her voice — the courtyard in the middle—

the enormous pool in the rocks, filled by the sea each tide, where the girls bathed time.

'And in each tower are the dormies where we sleep, and our common-rooms—the rooms we play about in, you know, when we're not in class," said Darrell. 'Our mistress is Miss Potts. By the way, which tower are you in?'

There was no answer. Darrell looked in angry indignation at Zerelda. She was fas

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DARRELL was so annoyed with Zerelda for falling asleep whilst she told her all. She took a good look at the American girl. She was certainly very striking-looking, though her mane of hair was not really a very nice shade of gold. Darrell 'It's a pity she's coming to Malory towers,' thought Darrell, looking closely at Zerelda's lashes and rosy cheeks. 'She just won't fit. Though Gwendoline will love her, I expect Mr. Rivers looked back at the sleeping Zerelda and gave Darrell a comradely grin. Then she gave herself a little shake. 'She may be quite nice really. It may just be 'Though thank goodness she'll be in a higher form, as she's nearly sixteen,' thought —whatever would Miss Potts think of her if she was!'

She thought of the downright Miss Potts. She thought of

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plump, sensible Matron who never stood any nonsense from anyone. And she thought 'Miss Peters! Gracious! She'd have a fit if Zerelda was in her form!' thought Darrell voiced Miss Peters in her mind's eye. 'It's really almost a pity she won't be in my school.' Darrell was tired when they at last reached Malory Towers. They had stopped twice in a proper manner to Mr. and Mrs. Rivers. Apparently she thought England was 'just wonderful.' Mrs. Rivers was polite and friendly, as she always was to everyone. Mr. Rivers, however, was not. 'Say, isn't your father wunnerful?' said Zerelda to Darrell, when they were speeding off—'and the black beetling brows? Wunnerful!'

Darrell wanted to giggle. She longed to tell her father about his 'black beetling brows.' 'Tell me about this school of yours,' said Zerelda, sweetly, thinking that Darrell was lying. 'I've told you already,' said Darrell, rather stiffly, 'but you must have been bored because you went to sleep.'

'Say, isn't that just too bad?' said Zerelda, apologetically.

'There's no time to tell you anything, anyway,' said Darrell,

'because here we are!' Her eyes shone as they always did when they saw Malory Towers again for the first time.

The car swept up to the front door. It always seemed like the entrance to a castle,

'Come on,' said Darrell, to Zerelda. 'Let's get out. Golly,

it's grand to be back! Hallo, Belinda! I say, Irene, got your health certificate? Hallo, Jean caught sight of Zerelda getting out of the car, and stared as if she couldn't believe it. 'Golly—who's that? Some relation of yours?' said Jean.

Darrell giggled. 'No, thank goodness. She's a new girl!'

'No! My word, what does she think she's come to Malory Towers for? To act in the same manner as I do? Darrell darted here and there among her friends, happy and excited. Her father understood. 'Blow! She's in our tower after all,' she thought. 'Hallo, Alicia! Had good hols?'

Alicia came up, her bright eyes gleaming. 'Super!' she said. 'My word—who's that?'

'New girl,' said Darrell. 'I know how you feel, I couldn't take my eyes off her either! Look—'

there's our dear Gwendoline Mary having a weep on Mother's shoulder as usual!'

bye to Gwendoline.

'There's Miss Winter, Gwendoline's old governess, too,' said Darrell. 'No wonder — always Mother's Darling Pet. We get some sense into her in term-time, and then she loses it all again in the hols.'

Gwendoline caught sight of Zerelda and stared in surprise. A look of great admiration. 'Gwendoline's going to worship Zerelda. Look! Don't you know that expression o

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one willing slave!'

Gwendoline said something to her mother and her governess. They both looked at her. 'Good-

bye, darling,' said her mother, still dabbing her eyes. 'Write to me heaps of times.' But Gwendoline Mary was not paying much attention. She was wondering if any of the other girls in the school. Zerelda stood looking round at all the bustle and excitement. She was dressed in the latest fashion. Darrell, seeing her father and mother about to go, rushed over to them to say good-bye.

'It's so nice to see you plunging into everything so happily as soon as you're back, —you seem quite big compared to the first-and second-formers now!'

'I should think so! Babies!' said Darrell, with a laugh. 'Good-bye, darlings. I'll write on Sunday as usual. Give Felicity my love and tell her Ma loves her ever.'

The car moved off down the drive. Darrell waved till it was gone. Then she felt a little lonely. 'Irene! I don't believe you;' said Darrell. 'Yes, I'll come. Where's my night-case? Oh, there it is. Hie, Gwendoline, look out with that lacrosse stick of yours.'

tripped me up.'

Darrell suddenly remembered Zerelda. 'Oh golly! I've forgotten Zerelda. She's gone —everyone laughing and ragging and talking and I didn't know a soul!'

She set off towards Zerelda. But Zerelda did not look at all lost or bewildered. She was waiting for him. Before Darrell could reach her someone else spoke to Zerelda.

'Are you a new girl? I believe you are in North Tower. If you'd like to come with me, 'Gee, that's kind of you,' said Zerelda, in her slow drawl.

'Look,' said Darrell, in disgust. 'There's Gwendoline Mary all over her already! Tell her I'll look after her, Darrell,' said Gwendoline, turning her large pale-blue eyes on Darrell. 'You go and look for Sally.'

'Sally's not coming back yet,' said Darrell, 'She's in quarantine. I'll look after Zerelda.' 'You can both take me around,' said Zerelda, charmingly, and smiled her slow smile. Alicia grinned. 'Let's hope dear Gwen will take her off our hands for good,' she said. The groans of Irene attracted their attention. 'Oh, Irene! I simply don't believe you're coming! Well, I have,' said Irene. 'Do come to Matron now and stand by me.'

So they all went to find Matron. Darrell and Alicia gave

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up their health certificates. Matron looked at Irene.

I've lost it, Matron,' said Irene. 'The worst of it is I don't even remember having it

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but I don't even remember that this time. My memory's getting worse than ever.'

'Your mother came to see me not ten minutes ago,' said Matron, 'and she gave me
Gwendoline brought Zerelda to Matron. Matron stared as if she couldn't believe it

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Zerelda Brass. Yes, you're in North Tower. Is this your health certificate? She's in
-and—er—get her ready to go down for a meal.'

Darrell grinned at Alicia, and Alicia winked back. Matron wouldn't be quite so pe

'Come on,' said Alicia. 'Let's go and unpack our night-
cases. I've heaps to tell you, Darrell!'

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•ANY more new girls coming, have you heard?' Darrell asked Alicia.

'Yes, one. Somebody called Wilhelmina,' said Alicia. 'She's coming tomorrow. O
'Who's Bill?' said Darrell.

'Wilhelmina, apparently,' said Alicia, taking the things out of her night-
case. 'She's got seven brothers! Imagine it! Seven! And she's the only girl.'

'Golly!' said Darrell, trying to imagine what it would be like to have seven brothe

'I should think she's half a boy herself then,' said Darrell.

'Probably,' said Alicia. 'Blow, where's my toothbrush? I know I packed it.'

'Look—

there's Mavis!' said Darrell. Alicia looked up. Mavis had been a new girl last term
—a most unusual voice that was being well trained.

Mavis was proud of her voice and proud of the career she was going to have. 'Wh
singer,' she was always saying, 'I shall sing in Milan. I shall sing in New York. W
singer, I shall...'

The others got very tired of hearing about Mavis's future career. But they were m

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'But the worst of Mavis is that she thinks she's just perfect because she's got such girl of the third form, and very blunt and forthright. 'She doesn't see that she's only

— and it's wonderful, we all know that. But what a pity to have a wonderful voice in Darrell hadn't liked Mavis. She looked at her now. She saw a discontented, conceited Mavis is all voice and vanity and nothing else,' she said to Alicia. 'I know that so well.' 'Yes,' said Alicia, and paused to glance at Mavis too. 'And yet. Darrell, that girl who I wonder if Gwendoline will still go on fussing round her, now she's seen Zerelda. Lou, or why everyone liked honest, trustable Jean.

'Where's Betty?' asked Darrell. 'I haven't seen her yet.' Betty was Alicia's best friend. She was not in North Tower, much to Alicia's sorrow. But Miss Grayling was go-lucky, don't-care ways.

'Betty's not coming back till half-term,' said Alicia, gloomily. 'She's got whooping-cough. Imagine it—six weeks before she can come back. She's only just started it. I heard yesterday.' 'Oh, I say—you'll miss her, won't you,' said Darrell. 'I shall miss Sally too.' 'Well, we'll just have to put up with each other, you and I, till Betty and Sally come.' 'But if I do that, I slide down to the bottom at once,' thought Darrell. 'I've got quite a lot to do. Mary-

Lou came up. She had grown a little taller, but she was still the same rather scared-looking girl. 'Hallo!' she said. 'Wherever did you pick Zerelda up, Darrell? I hear she's nearly sixteen.' 'No. Nearly sixteen,' said Darrell. 'I suppose Gwendoline is sucking up to her already. Miss Potts was the house-

mistress of North Tower, and, like Matron, not very good at putting up with nonsense. Darrell felt rather lost without Sally there to laugh with and talk to. She was glad to see her. 'Where's Sally? Darrell, I did some wizard sketching in the hols. I went to the circus

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circus sketches. You should just see the clowns!'

'Show the book to us this evening,' said Darrell, eagerly. Everyone loved Belinda. 'Seen Irene?' said Alicia. Belinda nodded. Irene was her friend, and the two were matched. Irene was talented at music and maths, but a scatterbrain at everything else. 'Seen Zerelda?' asked Darrell, with a grin. That was the question everyone asked. At supper that night there was a great noise. Everyone was excited. Mam'zelle Duformers of North Tower.

'You have had good holidays?' she enquired of everyone. 'You have been to the ce pas?'

There was a groan from the girls round the table. 'No, Mam'zelle! Don't let's do F Mam'zelle looked round the table for any new face. She always made a point of b 'This girl, she is made up for the films!' said Mam'zelle to herself. 'Oh, la la\ Why

about twenty! Why has Miss Grayling taken her here? She is not for Malory Tow

Zerelda seemed quite at home. She ate her supper very composedly. She was sitting. 'Have you lived all your life in America? Do you think you'll like England?' persisted. 'I think England's just wunnerful,' said Zerelda, for the sixth time. 'I think your little 'Wunnerful, isn't she?' said Alicia, under her breath to Darrell. 'Just wunnerful.' Everyone had to go early to bed on the first night, because most of the girls had had to. Zerelda was surprised when Gwendoline informed her that they had to go to bed. 'formers go at nine.'

'At nine,' said Zerelda, astonished. 'But in my country we go when we like. I shall 'Well, you slept in the car all right,' Darrell couldn't help saying. 'So you must be They all went to the common-

room after supper, chose their lockers, argued, switched on the wireless, switched Lou because she jumped when a spark flew out, and then sang a few songs. Mavis's voice dominated the rest. It really was a most remarkable voice, deep and grown for her age. One by one the girls fell silent and listened. Mavis sang on. Sh

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'Wunnerful!' said Zerelda, clapping loudly when the song was ended. 'Ree-

markable!

Mavis looked pleased. "When I'm an opera-singer," she began.

Zerelda interrupted her. "Oh, that's what you're going to be, is it? Gee, that's fine.

•Films! What do you mean? A film-

actress?" said Gwendoline Mary, her eyes wide.

"Yes. I act pretty well already," said Zerelda. not very modestly. "I'm always acting

'Wunnerful!' said Alicia, Irene and Belinda all together. Zerelda laughed.

"I guess I don't say things the way you say them," she said, good-naturedly.

"You'll have a chance to show how well you can act, this very term," said Gwendo — "Romeo and Juliet". You could be Juliet."

"That depends on Miss Hibbert," said Daphne's voice at once. Daphne had already

"Bed, girls," said Miss Potts' voice at the door. "Eight o'clock! Come along, everyo

4 ZERELDA GOES INTO THE FOURTH

IT was fun settling in the next day. The girls rushed into the third form classroom

"Zerelda's to go to the fourth form classroom," said Jean, looking round for the An

"I didn't think I would be," said Zerelda. "I'm much older."

Jean looked at her. "Zerelda," said Jean, "I'd better give you a word of advice. Miss style—

or your lipstick either. You'd better alter your hair and rub that awful stuff off you

"Why should I do what you tell me?" said Zerelda, on her dignity at once. She thou

"Well, I'm head-

girl of this form," said Jean. "That's why I 'm bothering to tell you. Just to save you

"But Zerelda's hair looks lovely," said Gwendoline, who always resented having to

Nobody took the slightest notice of Gwendoline's bleating.

"Well, thanks all the same, Jean, but I'm not going to make myself into a little pig-

tailed English schoolgirl," said Zerelda, in her lazy, rather insolent drawl. "I guess

—I'd soon get you some looks!"

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Daphne, who fancied herself as very pretty, laughed scornfully.

'Nobody wants to look a scarecrow like you! Honestly, if you could see yourself! I have,' said Zerelda. 'I looked in the glass this morning!'

'When you're in Rome, you must do as Rome does,' said Jean, solemnly.

'But I'm not in Rome,' said Zerelda.

'No. It's a pity you aren't!' said Alicia. 'You'll wish you were in three minutes' time.' Zerelda grinned good-

humouredly, and went off to find her classroom. As she got to the door Miss Williams met her. She and Zerelda met at the door.

Miss Williams had no idea that Zerelda was one of her form. The girl looked so good. Miss Williams blinked once or twice, trying to remember who Zerelda was. 'Er—let me see now—you are Miss Williams—er ... Miss ...' began Miss Williams.

'Zerelda,' said Zerelda, obligingly, thinking it was a queer thing if the mistress called her by name. 'Miss Zerelda,' said Miss Williams, still not realising anything. 'Did you want me, Zerelda was rather astonished. 'Well—er—

not exactly,' she said. 'I was told to come along to your class. I'm in the fourth form for you.' 'Good heavens!' said Miss Williams, weakly. 'Not—not one of the girls?'

'Yes, Miss Williams,' said Zerelda, thinking that the teacher was acting very queer.

'Yes,' said Miss Williams, recovering herself all at once. 'This is the fourth form for you.' Zerelda looked even more astonished. Had she got a hat on by mistake? She felt that there was something on her head. 'There's nothing on my head,' she said.

'Yes, there is. What's this thing?' said Miss Williams, patting the enormous roll of hair.

'That? Oh, that's a bit of my hair,' said Zerelda, wondering if Miss Williams was a girl. Miss Williams looked in silence at the roll of brassy coloured hair and the cascading red lips. She even looked at the curling eyelashes to make sure they were real and not stuck on.

'Well, Zerelda, I can't have you in my class like this,' she said, looking very prim like. 'Take down that roll of hair. Tie it all back. Clean your lips. Come back to th And with that she disappeared into the form room and the door was shut. Zerelda star she admired most of all?

Zerelda frowned. What a school! Here were a whole lot of girls, all growing up fa —'and I bet they're all as stupid as owls,' said Zerelda, out loud.

She decided to go along and do something to her hair. That prim and proper Miss hearted and kind, sensible and trustable, good, sound women

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the world could lean on. She had also said that Zerelda might learn something from

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and that Zerelda, if she was sensible and understanding, might also teach the English. 'Well, I don't want to get on the wrong side of Miss Grayling from the word go,' thought she. She found the dormitory at last and went in to do her hair. She looked at herself in the mirror. At once she looked younger. She rubbed the red from her lips. Then she looked at her dress. But Zerelda didn't look plain and drab. She looked a young girl, with a natural, polished—more polite and proper than in an American school. She decided to knock. 'Come in!' called Miss Williams, impatiently. She had forgotten all about Zerelda. 'What do you want?' she asked Zerelda. 'Have you come with a message?' 'No,' said Zerelda, puzzled. 'I'm in the fourth form, aren't I?' 'What's your name?' said Miss Williams, looking for her list of names.

Zerelda was now quite certain that Miss Williams was mad. 'I told you before,' she said. 'Oh, good gracious—so you are,' said Miss Williams, looking at her keenly. 'Well, who would have thought that? The fourth form were mystified and amused. They were all keen hard-working fifteen-year-olds, who were to work for their School Certificate that year.

"Let me see—how old are you, Zerelda?" said Miss Williams, trying to find Zerelda's name on her list. 'Nearly sixteen,' said Zerelda.

'Ah then—you will probably find the work of this form rather easy,' said Miss Williams. 'But Zerelda looked round at the fourth-formers. She thought they looked too clever for words. How serious they were! She saw that the third form were busy making out time-tables and lists of duties. Books were given out. Miss Peters, tall, mannish, with white gloves on Saturday mornings at Malory Towers.

'I really wonder she doesn't come to class in riding-breeches,' Alicia had said often enough to the third form, making them giggle. 'Try them on.' 'Shall I put a set of books for the new girl, Wilhelmina Robinson?' asked Jean, with

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'This morning, I believe,' said Miss Peters. 'She and her brothers have been in quarantine. After Break the third form went to the sewing-room for half an hour, and it was from there that they saw the arrival, the quite as they suddenly heard the clatter of horses' hooves outside —

a tremendous clatter. Alicia went to the window at once, wondering if there was a lesson for anyone. She gave an exclamation.

'I say! Just look here! Whoever is it?' All the class crowded to the window. Miss Grayling, the temperate sewing-mistress, protested mildly. 'Girls, girls! What are you doing?'

'Miss Donnelly, come and look,' said Alicia. So she went to the window. She saw

'Golly! It must be Wilhelmina!' said Darrell. 'And her seven brothers! Don't say that!'

'Well! What a way to arrive!' said Gwendoline Mary. 'Galloping up like that on horseback!'

5 THE ARRIVAL OF WILHELMINA

UNFORTUNATELY the bell for the next class rang at that moment and the third formers could not see what happened next. Would Miss Grayling come out to the school? How would Wilhelmina enter the Towers? Darrell imagined her riding up. 'Golly! Fancy riding to school like that,' said Alicia. 'I suppose she's going to keep her hair. Nobody had been able to see clearly what Wilhelmina had looked like. In fact, it was in breeches. The third-

formers went to their classroom, discussing the new arrival excitedly. Wilhelmina said, 'I shall be scared of her,' said Mary-Lou.

'Don't be silly,' said Mavis, who was always very scornful of Mary-Lou.

'Why should you be scared of her? I just hate tomboys, and I'm sure she's one. Miss Peters doesn't,' said Darrell.

'Oh, Miss Peters!' said Mavis. 'I'll be glad when I'm out of her class. She's too headstrong.' Darrell laughed. Miss Peters was rather hearty and loudvoiced. But she was a good

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Wilhelmina didn't turn up in the classroom that morning, but Jean found Matron saying, 'She looks like a boy!'

'Jean,' said Matron, 'you're head-

girl of the third, aren't you? Well, look after Wilhelmina for me, will you, and take her — this is Jean, head-girl of your form.'

'Hallo,' said Wilhelmina and grinned a boyish grin that showed big white teeth. She had hair cropped almost as short as a boy's. It curled a little, which she had a tilted nose, a big mouth, and big, wide-set eyes of hazel-

brown. She was covered with freckles from forehead to firm little chin.

'Hallo,' said Jean. 'I saw you arrive—on horseback, didn't you?'

'Yes,' said Wilhelmina. 'My seven brothers came with me. Mummy was awfully cross—but we got our horses and shot off before they started!'

'Good gracious!' said Jean. 'Did you really? Have you each got a horse?'

'Yes. We've got big stables,' said Wilhelmina. 'Daddy keeps racehorses too. I say—I've never been to boarding-

school before. Is it awful? If it is I shall saddle Thunder and ride away.'

Jean stared at Wilhelmina and wondered if she meant all this. She decided that she

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'Malory Towers is a jolly fine school,' said Jean. 'You'll like it.'

'Shall I be able to ride Thunder each day?' asked Wilhelmina, staring round the big

'Haven't you ever been to school before?' asked Belinda, who had been listening to

'No. I shared the tutor that three of my brothers had,' said Wilhelmina. 'There was Belinda liked this outspoken girl. I bet you won't,' she said, and cast her eye round

'Don't be beastly,' said Gwendoline, cross at having fun poked at her in front of a

'It will all seem a bit queer to you at first,' said Jean. 'If you've been even to a day—but never to have been to school at all—

well, you're sure to feel a bit strange, Wilhelmina.'

I say—

would you mind very much if I asked you something?' said Wilhelmina, staring

'What?' said Jean, wondering what was coming. The others came round to listen.

'Well,' she said, 'I've never in my life been called Wilhelmina. Never. It's a frightful

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THEARRIVALOFWILHELMINA

be miserable. I shan't feel I'm myself.'

In the usual way if a new girl asked for a nickname, she would have been laughed at. 'Yes. We'll call you Bill. It suits you. Wilhelmina's a nice name for some people, —and Jean?'

'Yes,' they agreed at once. They couldn't help liking this sturdy, freckled girl with her bright eyes. 'Well, thanks awfully,' said Bill. 'Thanks most awfully. Now I can forget I was ever Mavis and Gwendoline Mary looked as if they didn't approve of this at all. Why should Zerelda come into the cloakroom, her hair still done properly, without the big roll? 'Gracious, Zerelda! You do look different—

about ten years younger! I bet Miss Williams was mad with you, wasn't she?'

'She was mad all right,' said Zerelda. "Really queer, I mean! I'm quite scared of her —who in the big wide world is this?'

She stood and stared in the utmost wonder at Bill, who looked back, quite unabashed. 'Are you a boy or a girl?' enquired Zerelda. 'Gee, I

wouldn't know!'

'My name's Bill,' said Bill with a grin. 'Short for Wilhelmina. What's yours?'

'Zerelda. Short for nothing,' said Zerelda. 'Why do you wear your hair like that?'

'Because I couldn't bear to wear it like yours,' retorted Bill.

Zerelda stared at Bill again as if she really couldn't believe her eyes.

'I've never seen a girl like you before,' she said. 'Gee, you're wunnerful! Gee, I think

'Anyone would think you hadn't got an English mother,' said Darrell. 'You've lived

'My mother's as American as anyone,' said Zerelda. 'I don't know why she's gotten

'WUNNERFUL!' chorused everyone, and Zerelda laughed.

A bell rang. 'Dinner!' yelled Belinda. 'I'm starving. Rotten breakfasts we get here!

'Rotten!' agreed everyone. They had all eaten big plates of porridge and milk, scrubbed unless, of course, an outsider dared to criticize the food, and then it suddenly became

They tore down to the dining-room. Zerelda went to sit with the third-

formers, having put up rather a poor show in the fourth form that morning, and felt —but Miss Williams called her over.

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THIRD YEAR AT MALORY TOWERS

THE ARRIVAL OF WILHELMINA

'Zerelda! This is your table now. Let me look at your hair.'

Zerelda submitted to Miss Williams' close examination, glad that she had not put —no, not wunnerful— what was a the word the others used—

yes, they were wizard!

Darrell wrote to Sally that night and told her about Bill and Zerelda.

You'll like Bill (short for Wilhelmina), [she wrote]. All grins and freckles and ver
She bit her pen and then went on.

But, oh my, Zereldal She thinks she's going to be a film-
star and says she's 'wunnerful' at acting. You should have seen the way she did he

—
and they way she made up her face! We thought we were going to have some fun
Somebody put their head in at the door.' Hey, is Wilhelmina here? Matron wants
Nobody stirred. 'Wilhemina!' said the voice again. 'Hey, you, new girl! Aren't you

Bill put down her book hastily. 'Golly, yes, so I am!' she said. T quite forgot. I rea
She went out and everyone laughed. 'Good old Bill! I'd like to see Matron's face v

BILL AND THUNDER 33

6 BILL AND THUNDER

AFTER a few days it seemed to Darrell as if she had been back at school for wee
school, where you got up all together, had meals together, planned fun for every c
Wilhelmina, or Bill, had been rather silent those first two or three days. Darrell w

—
life was so full and so jolly at Malory Towers that there simply wasn't time for an
All the same, she thought Bill looked a bit serious. 'Not homesick, are you?' she a
'Oh no. I'm horse-
sick!' said Bill, surprisingly. 'I keep on and on thinking of all our horses at home

-
Beauty and Star and Blackie and Velvet and Midnight and Miss Muffet and Lady
'Good gracious! However do you remember all those names?' said Darrell, in surp
T couldn't possibly forget them,'said Bill, solemnly. 'I'm going to like Malory Tow

—
oh, you can't understand, Darrell. You'll think me silly, I know. You see, I and the
—four miles away—and we used to go out and saddle and bridle our horses—
and then off we'd go, galloping over the hills.'

'Well, you couldn't do that all your life long,' said Darrell, sensibly. 'And anyway,
'That's why I said I'd come to Malory Towers,' said Bill. "Because I could bring Thunder—
—it's been the week-end so far, when there weren't lessons—

I'm just dreading to think what will happen when I have to go to classes and perhaps
Darrell gave a squeal of laughter. 'Oh, Bill—

you're mad! Golly I'd love to have Thunder in the classroom too. I bet he'd neigh
'She wouldn't. She doesn't like horses. She told me so,' said Bill. 'She's scared of Thunder.
Most of the third-

formers had been out to the stables to see Bill's wonderful horse. Actually he didn't like
Mavis, Gwendoline, Daphne and Mary-

Lou would not go near him. He was a big black horse, and they all felt certain he
Zerelda was not scared of him, and she admired him very much. 'Gee, he's wonderful!
Bill scowled. She hated to be called by her full name. 'I suppose you'd ride him in
—and rings on your fingers and bells on your

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BILL AND THUNDER 35

toes!' she retorted. 'All the way to Banbury Cross.'

Zerelda didn't understand. She didn't know the old English nursery rhyme. She snorted.
'You're wonderful when you scowl like that,' she said.

'Shut up,' said Bill, and turned away. She was puzzled by Zerelda and her grown-up
ways—

and even more puzzled by her good humour. Zerelda never seemed to take offence.
She made the others feel small and young and rather stupid. They felt uncomfortable in her
up manner, jeering gently at their clothes, their 'hair-dos' as she called them, their liking for getting hot and muddy at games, and their
But she was generous and kind, and never lost her temper, so it was difficult to really
sing to her immensely.

The first full week of school began on the next day, Monday. No more leniency for
goingways. 'Work, now, work for everyone!' said Miss Peters. 'It's not a very long

The third form did not have only the third form girls from North Tower but the th formers from others towers too, so it was a fairly big form. The standard was high. Mavis had been in Miss Peters' black books the term before, because of her poor cry, 'when I'm an opera-singer' and she was quite determined

to make Mavis a good third-former, opera-singer or not.

'You'd better look out, Mavis,' said Gwendoline, catching a certain look in Miss F. 'When I want your advice I'll ask for it,' said Mavis. "I'm not scared of our hearty —you'll never have a career, or be Somebody!"

Gwendoline was very hurt. Like many silly, weak people she had a great idea of l. 'If you're going to say things like that I shan't be friends with you,' she whispered.

'Go and tag round Zerelda then,' said Mavis, forgetting to whisper softly enough.

'Mavis! That's enough whispering between you and Gwendoline,' said Miss Peter.

Bill couldn't seem to settle down that first Monday morning at all. She stared out

'Wilhelmina!' said Miss Peters at last. 'Did you hear anything of what I have just s

Everyone turned to look at Bill, who still gazed out of the window, a dreamy exp

'Wilhelmina!' said Miss Peters, sharply. 'I am speaking to you.'

Still Bill took no notice at all. To the girls' amusement and surprise she suddenly

Miss Peters was astonished. The girls giggled. Darrell

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BILL AND THUNDER

knew what Bill was doing. She had heard that funny little crooning noise before—it was the noise Bill made to Thunder, when he nuzzled against her shoulder!

'She must be pretending she's with Thunder!' thought

Darrell. 'She's in the stables with him. She's not here at all.'

Miss Peters wondered if Wilhelmina was feeling all right.

She spoke to her again. 'Wilhelmina, are you deaf? What's the matter?'

Gwendoline gave Bill a poke in the back and made her jump. She looked round at dreams. Gwendoline nodded violently towards Miss Peters.

'That'll do, Gwendoline,' said Miss Peters. 'Wilhelmina, will you kindly give me y

'Oh, sorry! Have you really?' said Bill, apologetically. 'Perhaps you kept calling n
Miss Peters looked most disapproving. What an extraordinary girl!

'In future, Wilhelmina, please pay attention to all I say, and I shall not need to ad

—
please don't be impertinent.' Bill looked astonished. 'Oh, Miss Peters! I wasn't bei

'Thunder!' said Miss Peters, who had no idea that Bill had a horse called Thunder

'But it's just the day to think of Thunder!' said Bill, her eyes shining. 'Just think of

Everyone tried to suppress giggles. They knew perfectly well that Wilhelmina wa

Miss Peters looked more impatient than ever.

'That's enough, Wilhelmina,' she said. 'We'll have no more talk of thunder or ligh

'Oh, how did you know that my brother George's horse was called Lightning?' sai

But now Miss Peters felt certain that Wilhelmina was being silly and rather rude,

'Have you got your book open at page thirty-

three?' she asked. T thought you hadn't! How do you think you are going to follo

Bill hastily found page thirty-

three. She tried to put all thoughts of Thunder out of her mind. She made a soft cl

'Horse-

mad!' whispered Alicia, and when Miss Peters' back was turned, Alicia rocked to

Darrell hugged herself in delight. It was lovely to be back at school again, lovely

'I'll beg her to play one of her tricks,' thought Darrell. 'We haven't had any real fu

IN THE THIRD FORM COMMON-ROOM

7 IN THE THIRD FORM COMMON-ROOM

IT was sunny but cold the first week or two of that Easter term. The girls squabbled in the common-room. Gwendoline, Mavis and Daphne were the ones that complained most of the

— but they were the ones who took as little exercise as they could, so of course they didn't seem to feel the cold at all. She was still tanned, although it was early in the spring. 'They went out ten minutes before the others to practise catching. Gwendoline cornered Zerelda, of course, being a fourth-

former, was now not very often able to be with any of the third-formers, so Gwendoline had had to give up any idea of being her best friend. Zerelda came to the common-room in the evening—

saying she wanted to borrow a book or a gramophone record—

and then stopping to talk to Darrell and the others.

'Got a special friend yet?' Darrell asked her one evening. Zerelda twisted one of her hands.

'No,' she said. 'Stuck-

up things, the fourth form! They seem to think I don't pull my weight. And they tell me I'm not good enough to be in the team for lacrosse!'

'Well, you're so tall, you could do well in the team,' said Darrell, considering her.

'Run! I don't want to run!' said Zerelda, astonished. 'As for that games captain—what's her name—Molly Ronaldson—

well, I ask you, did you ever see such a girl? Big as a horse and just about as clumsy!' Darrell laughed. 'Molly Ronaldson is one of the finest games captains we've ever had in our teams. My goodness, if I could get into one of the teams I'd be so thrilled I would cry.'

'Is that so?' said Zerelda, in her slow drawl, looking quite astonished. 'Well, maybe—but I'd not lose my beauty sleep for any games in the world!'

'You're a queer person, Zerelda,' said Darrell. She looked at her earnestly. 'You're

— I mean, you just won't let yourself enjoy the things most English girls of your age enjoy. 'Messing about in the gym! That's another thing I can't understand your liking!' said Darrell. 'I can't understand that either,' she said in a prim voice. 'It's a pity you are so set against it. Only because, dear Gwendoline, you're so jolly bad at them that you make a fool

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IN THE THIRD FORM COMMON-ROOM

the gym or on the games field,' said Alicia, maliciously. 'Zerelda's different. I bet—but she thinks that all that kind of thing is beneath her.'

Any other girl would have resented this, but Zerelda only grinned. Gwendoline, however, looked at Alicia.

'Nice little scowl you've got, Gwen,' said Belinda, appearing suddenly with her sketchbook. 'Do you mind if I draw you like that? It's such a lovely scowl!'

Gwendoline scowled still more and flounced away. She knew Belinda's clever pen and pencil, accompanied by delighted giggles. Belinda shut her book and looked disappointed. 'Oh, she's gone! And it was such a lovely scowl! Never mind—

I'll watch out for it and draw it another time.'

'Beast!' said Gwendoline, under her breath and went to sit by Mavis. She knew she should. 'You'd better go back to the fourth form common-

room now,' said Jean to Zerelda. 'The fourth-

formers won't like it if you begin to live with us! We're rather beneath their notice now, Zerelda.' 'I know. I wish I wasn't,' said Zerelda, getting up. 'Aren't the fourth-

Zerelda shrugged her shoulders and went out gracefully. 'If she'd think of something to do, she would put herself out to play games decently and take some interest in her

the school at all.'

Irene drifted in, looking for something. She hummed a lively little tune. 'Tumty-ta-ti-tumpty-ta-ti-

too!' She had just composed a gay dance, and was very pleased about it. The girls were watching her.

'Where are you off to at this time of the evening, Irene?' asked Alicia.

Irene looked surprised. 'Nowhere,' she said. 'I'm just looking for my music-book. I want to write down my new tune. Tumty-ta-ti-tumpty-ta-ti-too!'

'Yes, very nice,' said Alicia, approvingly. 'But why have you got your hat and cloak on?'

'Oh, good gracious, have I?' said Irene, in dismay. She looked down at her cloak and hat.

'Well, you didn't have them on at tea-

time or Miss Potts would have said something!' said Alicia. 'You really are a clumsy girl.'

'Oh, yes, I know now what must have happened,' said Irene, sitting down in a chair. 'I was thinking of my new tune—

and I must have taken my hat out instead of my stockings, and put it on—

and then put on my cloak too. Blow! Now I shall have to go and take them off an
—and I do want to write down that tune.'

'I'll take them up for you and find your stockings,' said Belinda, who knew that Ir

'Will you? Angel!' said Irene, and pulled off her hat and cloak. Darrell laughed. B
—and ten to one that she wouldn't remember the stockings!

Belinda disappeared with the hat and cloak. Irene began

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THIRD YEAR AT MALORY TOWERS

IN THE THIRD FORM COMMON-ROOM

to hum her tune again. Mavis sang it in her lovely rich voice.

'Fine!' said Irene, pleased. 'You make it sound twice as good, Mavis. One day I'll sing it in New York,' said Mavis, graciously. 'And that should make you famous singer, I...'

'When you're an opera-

singer, Mavis, you'll be even more conceited than you are now,' said Alicia's sharp-tongued Jean! 'Can't you stop Alicia saying such beastly unfair things?' protested Mavis, now grown up.'

'Alicia's tongue is getting a bit sharp,' said Jean, 'but you do rather ask for sharp tongues.' Mavis was silent and cross. Gwendoline began to sympathize with her, for she too was darning a stocking in a corner, hoped that she would not come in for a flick. 'Where's Belinda?' said Darrell. 'She's an awful long time getting those stockings.' 'So she is,' said Irene, who had now completely forgotten about her stockings. 'But Mam'zelle came bustling in, tip-tapping on her small feet in their high-heeled shoes. She held a hat and cloak in her hand.

'Irene!' she said, reproachfully, 'these are yours! Three times already have I cleared them up for you.' Irene stared in surprise. 'But—where were they?' she asked.

'On the stairs—

lying for me to fall over,' said Mam'zelle. 'I see them on the stairs as I come down the stairs. I mark!'

'Oh no, Mam'zelle!' said Irene, distressed. Order-

marks counted against the whole form. 'Mam'zelle, I'm really very sorry.'

'One order-mark,' said Mam'zelle, and departed on her high heels.

'Blow Belinda!' said Irene. 'What possessed her to put them on the stairs?'

Belinda came in at that moment. She was greeted by a volley of remarks. 'We've got an order-mark because of you, idiot! What did you do with Irene's things? Mam'zelle found them.' 'Golly!' said Belinda, dismayed. 'Yes, I remember. I was going up the stairs with them—' and must have forgotten all about them. 'I am sorry, Irene.'

'It's all right,' said Irene, solemnly putting on her hat and cloak. 'I'll take them up now—' and I'll jolly well wear them so that I can't leave them lying about either!'

She disappeared for a long time. The bell rang for supper. There was a general clatter of chairs and plates, and the girls got ready to go to the dining-room.

'Where's Irene now?' said Jean, exasperated. 'Honestly she ought to be kept in a cage. Here she is!' said Darrell, with a shout of laughter. 'Irene! You've still got your hair mark if we don't look out.'

A BAD TIME FOR ZERELDA

8 A BAD TIME FOR ZERELDA

DURING the first two or three weeks of term poor Zerelda had a very bad time. /
formers, and should therefore have found the work easy, she found, to her dismay
It was a blow to Zerelda. After all her posing, and grown-up ways, and her mann
'Have you never done these sums before?' asked Miss
Williams, in astonishment. 'And what about algebra and
geometry? You don't appear to understand the first thing
about them, Zerelda.' ;

'We—we don't seem to do our lessons in America the j
same way as you do them here,' said Zerelda. 'We don't
bother so much. I never liked algebra or geometry, so I didn't j
worry about them.' j

Miss Williams looked most disapproving. Was America |
really so slack in its teaching of children, or was it just that |
Zerelda was stupid? j

'It isn't only your maths,' she said at last. 'It's almost] everything, Zerelda. Didn't
school?'

Zerelda thought hard. 'Maybe we did,' she said at last, j 'But I guess we didn't pay
'And didn't you do any history?' said Miss Williams, i realize, of course, that the l
but Miss Carton, the history

mistress, tells me that you don't know a single thing even about the history of you
Zerelda looked troubled. She tried to think of something her school had really wo
—there was the dramatic class!

'We did a lot of Shakespeare, Miss Williams,' she said. 'Gee! I just loved your Sh.
'Yes. I can quite imagine it,' said Miss Williams, drily. "But there's a little more to
Zerelda was really alarmed. Gee, wasn't it enough to have all these classes and ga
'Well, Zerelda, I won't burden you with extra work just yet, if you'll really make a
—er—quite so much attention to your face, shall we say—and nails—and hair?'

Zerelda was annoyed. She was going to study to be a famous film-
star, so what was the use of all this algebra and history stuff? Just waste of time fi

it was just that American schools and English were so different. They had differe
She looked down at her long, beautifully polished nails and well-
kept hands. She felt that Miss Williams had shamed

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A BAD TIME FOR ZERELDA

her and made her feel small. Zerelda couldn't bear that! She was better than any of them. So she looked stubborn and said nothing. Miss Williams gathered up her papers, and said, 'Well, that's all for now,' she said, briskly. 'I shall expect much better work from you next time—'—and please do think of the other fourth-

formers too. You know that returned work means an order-mark, which counts against the whole form. You have got far too many.'

Zerelda thought that order-

marks were very silly. She wouldn't have minded at all getting twenty or thirty a year. The fourth formers minded very much.

The head-

girl, Lucy, spoke to Zerelda about it. 'Look here, Zerelda, can't you stop getting order-marks? There are two half-

holidays given this term, but any form getting over forty order-marks has the holiday withheld. The form will be pretty wild if you make them miss a holiday, I can tell you!'

So, what with some serious talks from Miss Williams and some tickings-

off from Lucy, and from Ellen, a serious, scholarship girl who had gone up from the first form,

'There doesn't seem time to do anything!' she thought to herself, as she polished her hair—

—and it takes ages to curl it properly and set it—

and I can't let my complexion go—

or my nails. I don't have a minute to myself. But I simply must do something about it.

So Zerelda really did try with the work. But her pride would not let her cast off her head. She no longer really looked down on the English girls, but she

was still going to show them that she, Zerelda, was far, far above them in all the ways of the world.

Zerelda had hoped that she would be able to show her ability for acting in the play.

'C'est terrible!' cried Mam'zelle Dupont, and the other Mam'zelle for once agreed with her. Hours telling each other of 'Zerelda, cet enfant terrible,' that terrible girl.

When Zerelda had been awarded fifteen order-

marks, had three lessons out of every six returned, and had one day given in no part of the term,

'Zerelda Brass isn't up to the fourth form,' she told Miss Grayling. 'She's making too many order-marks she's getting. The trouble is they know what a lot of time she wastes over her work.'

—only silly, and brought up with quite the wrong ideas. What are we to do?'
'Do you think extra coaching would help?' asked Miss Grayling. 'She is nearly six
'No. I don't think extra coaching would help at all,' said Miss Grayling. 'It would '

—
and I really doubt if she's up to third form standard either! The trouble is she's got
'Oh course they do,' said Miss Grayling. 'And quite rightly' She said nothing for a

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A BAD TIME FOR ZERELDA

She had hoped that the American girl would be good for the English girls, and that 'She must go down into the third form,' said Miss Grayling at last, 'I know it is a hardship—but somehow I feel that won't do her any harm. Send her to me.'

'Thank you, Miss Grayling,' said Miss Williams, and went out, really relieved to find the marks that Zerelda had unfortunately got for her form. They would be pleased. The third was a working form, and Miss Williams was proud of them. She was glad to get rid of a bad girl. 'But she's not really a bad girl,' thought Miss Williams, who was very fair-minded. 'She's just not up to standard in any way. She'll be better in the third form.' She sent Zerelda down to Miss Grayling. Zerelda, who would have laughed at the suggestion in her own room.

She went in and stood in front of the Head Mistress's desk. Miss Grayling put down her pen. 'Zerelda, I have sent for you because I think you are not up to the standard of the fourth form. I am sorry about this because you are really above their average age,' said Miss C

will not take kindly to quite so many order-marks as you have been producing for them.'

Zerelda blushed an even brighter scarlet, and was angry to feel herself going so roundly. 'Therefore I think you will do better if you go into the third form,' said Miss Grayling—or lessons--quite so seriously as they will when in the fourth form—so you should be happier there, and able to work better.'

Zerelda was shocked. To go down into a lower form! What a disgrace! True, she had been in the fourth form for some time, and didn't get on with the fourth form girls—but she didn't want to slide down a whole form! Whatever would her people say—and her English grandmother would be amazed.

'Oh, Miss Grayling—

gee, I wouldn't like that,' said Zerelda, in distress. She undid a button and did it up again. 'Don't pull that button off, Zerelda,' said Miss Grayling. 'I think you'll soon settle down. But, Miss Grayling—

don't make me do that!' begged Zerelda, feeling very small and disgraced, and not wanting to do the work too. 'You see...'

'Yes, I quite see all that,' said Miss Grayling. 'It's partly because of that I think if you don't slide down any further, will you? You belong to a great country, and you are

This was the one thing that could touch Zerelda. Gee, she stood for America, didn't

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third form, she'd not even make a fuss. And if the girls teased her, she'd just show

—

she would try to get on with the work all right. Certainly she wouldn't slide down
'You may go, Zerelda,' said Miss Grayling, and Zerelda went. Miss Grayling watched
star, how nice she might be!

ON THE LACROSSE FIELD

MISS GRAYLING sent for Miss Peters and told her that Zerelda was to come into the third form. 'That will be hard for her,' said Miss Peters. 'Not the work, I mean—though I don't think Zerelda will find even third form work easy—but the disgrace.'

'Sometimes hard things are good for us,' said Miss Grayling, and Miss Peters nodded—they came to learn other things too—

to be just and fair, generous, brave, kind. Perhaps those things were even more important than the work. 'I don't know if you think it would be a good thing to say something to the third-formers before Zerelda appears in their classroom,' said Miss Grayling. 'You have Gwendoline, for instance—

who might not be very kind. A word or two beforehand might be as well'

'Yes. Just as well,' said Miss Peters. 'Well, I don't expect an easy time with Zerelda—she spends all her time on her appearance, you know—

I've not much use for that kind of girl.'

'No,' said Miss Grayling, thinking that probably it would be good for Zerelda to hear that—there's plenty of good in the girl—she seems very good-

humoured, and I like her smile. Just say a few words to your form, but don't make a fuss.

So, to the third form's intense surprise, Miss Peters said the 'few words' to them the next day.

'Oh, by the way,' she said, 'we are to have an addition to the third form.'

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ON THE LACROSSE FIELD

our form. Zerelda Brass is coming to us.'

Gwendoline drew in her breath sharply, and looked round with a triumphant expression—actually in her form, and in her common-

room! Gwendoline could dance attendance on her all she pleased. She would be happy to let Miss Peters read Gwendoline's face wrongly. 'Gwendoline! I hope you will not do that!' 'Oh, Miss Peters!' said Gwendoline, a most hurt expression on her face, 'as if I would let Miss Peters didn't know whether to believe this or not. She disliked and distrusted her. 'It would be just as well not to discuss the matter with Zerelda if she would rather—

—but at the back of her sharp-witted mind she knew that Zerelda's disgrace would be a nice little weapon to take to the and-mighty airs.

After the afternoon class there was half an hour's lacrosse practice. The third-formers streamed out, Gwendoline last as usual, with Mavis running her close. Then they heard 'Golly! Fancy being chucked out of a form like that!' said Irene. 'Poor old Zerelda! I should think she feels too ashamed for anything,' said Mary-

Lou. 'I know how I should feel. I shouldn't want to look anyone in the face again!' 'I bet the fourth form are glad,' said Jean. 'Ellen told me

they had got more order-

marks because of Zerelda than they've ever had before! Let's hope she doesn't pre-empt—except when Irene and Belinda leave their brains behind!' 'I think we all ought to be very nice to Zerelda,' announced Gwendoline. Then Mavis looked at Gwendoline sourly. She knew quite well that once Zerelda appeared—

'Well,' said Darrell, 'Zerelda's got her faults, but she's jolly good-tempered and generous—and I vote we welcome her and show her we're glad to have her.'

'So, feeling rather virtuous and generous-hearted, the third-formers made up their minds to be very nice to Zerelda, and ease her disgrace as much as they could. They pictured her slinking into their form room the next day, red in the face, hanging her head. Poor Zerelda! She would be glad of their welcome.

'Darrell! Darrell Rivers! Come over her and I'll give you some catches,' called the teams. But it was hard for a third-

former to be in a school team unless she was very big and strong.

'You catch well, Darrell!' called the games mistress. 'One of these days you'll get team. We could do with a good runner and catcher in the third match team.'

Darrell glowed with pride. Oh! If only she could be in the match-

team. How pleased her mother and father would be and how she would boast to F team when we went to play Barchester. I was on the wing because I'm so fast. An

ON THE LACROSSE FIELD

Darrell ran straight into Mam 'zelle

She pictured it all as she ran to take another catch. Suppose she practised very hard. But Molly was seventeen and Darrell was only fourteen. Molly seemed a very high up, distant, rather grand person to Darrell, who hadn't really a very high opinion of her. She saw Molly as she was going off the field, hot and happy. She screwed up all her courage and said, 'Please, Molly—

could I just ask you something? I do so want to be in one of the match-teams one day. Do you think there might be a possible chance if I do extra practice—and—and if you could give me any tips?'

As red as a beetroot Darrell stared at Molly, the famous games captain. Molly laughed. 'Good kid!' she said. 'I was only saying to Joan yesterday how you were coming close to being a team player, and you can come along any of the times you're free.'

'Oh, thank you, Molly,' breathed Darrell, hardly able to speak for joy. 'I'll come every time.' 'Now, what is this behaviour?' said Mam'zelle, tottering on her high heels and clutching her cane. 'Oh, Mam'zelle—

sorryV cried Darrell, happily. 'Honestly I didn't mean it. Oh, Mam'zelle, Molly R

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ON THE LACROSSE FIELD

give me extra coaching at lacrosse. Think of it! I might be in the third match-team one day!'

Mam'zelle was just going to remark that not for anything would she rejoice at that. 'I am very glad for you, mapetiteV she said. 'It is indeed a high honour. But do not pit!'

'Pitter-pat, you mean, Mam'zelle,' said Darrell, and ran off laughing.

She told the others what Molly had said. They were most impressed, all except the team, though one or two steady ones, such as Jean, had tried very hard. So had Sally. 'What with Bill rushing off to her horse every single minute, Irene rushing off to her room,' said Alicia, a little jealous of Molly's notice of Darrell.

'Zerelda will be there to make up!' said Darrell. 'I don't expect she'll mind our corner—she was always slipping into our common-room till you stopped her, Jean.'

Zerelda came to the third form classroom the next day, carrying her pencil-box and paint-

box, which she had forgotten to take to the form room the night before. She walked in.

The third-formers immediately began to be nice. 'Here, Zerelda—

wouldn't you rather have this desk till Sally comes back?' said Darrell. 'It's got a nice view.'

'No, Zerelda. You come and sit by me,' said Gwendoline.

'I should like that.'

Alicia looked keenly at Zerelda. Zerelda looked exactly the same as ever! She did not

'I don't believe she cares a bit!' thought Alicia. But Zerelda did. She cared terribly

She wished they wouldn't try and be kind to her like this. It was nice of them, but

'Keep your chin up, Zerelda!' she said to herself. 'You're American. Fly the Stars and Stripes.'

So, appearing quite unconcerned, she took the desk she had put her things in the room.

box and paint-

box, and began to look for the book she would need for the first lesson.

The third-

formers felt a little indignant. They had so virtuously and generously decided to v

—

and she didn't seem to mind at all. She was exactly the same as usual, speaking in

Darrell felt rather annoyed. She considered that Zerelda ought to have shown a lit

Miss Peters came in briskly as usual. Mary-Lou shut the door. Miss Peters swept keen eyes round the class. 'Sit!' she said, and but Miss Peters saw what the others did not see—a rather panic-stricken heart under all Zerelda's brave show. A hand that shook slightly as she pi—a voice that

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wasn't quite so steady as usual.

'She feels it all right,' thought Miss Peters. 'But she's not going to show it. Well, s The lesson began. Zerelda concentrated hard. She forgot her hair, her nails, her cl

10 BILL AND MISS PETERS

MOST of the third-

formers were now almost settled in to their term's work. Alicia, however, was res—

but she hadn't Betty's witty tongue, nor her daredevil ways. Still she was better th Bill was restless too. Bill had got the idea that Thunder was pining for the other h 'How you do coddle that horses!' said Alicia, in disgust, i wonder he puts up with Miss Peters was always pouncing on Bill for dreaming in class. Bill's standard of 'He didn't think we did much maths in a girls" school,' explained Bill. 'But I do kr T should hope so!' groaned Miss Peters. 'You will simply have to have extra coac 'Oh, I can't,' said Bill. "I spend every minute of free time with Thunder.' Miss Peters had known for some time now that Thunder was Bill's horse. She hac

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BILL AND MISS PETERS

But she was annoyed because she was only allowed to ride out with the others for
 'But I do at home,' she protested loudly. 'I've gone off by myself every day for years.
 'Yes, I know all that,' explained Miss Peters, patiently, for the twentieth time. 'But
 'I don't see why not,' said Bill, obstinately. She often sounded rude, because she was
 'Well, you are not running this school, fortunately,' said Miss Peters. 'You must do
 Bill was dumbfounded. She stared at Miss Peters as if she couldn't believe her ears.
 'But I couldn't not see Thunder,' said Bill, trying to speak patiently. 'You don't understand.
 'I dare say,' said Miss Peters, equally patiently. 'But I'm not too top-heavy
 heavy about them, as you are—

I mean, I don't think, dream, smell and ride horses every minute of the day and night.
 But that was just what Bill couldn't do, as the other third-formers soon found out. She wouldn't go for extra practice

at lacrosse. She wouldn't go for a nature walk. She wouldn't even take on any of her
 room, which everyone had to do in turn. She got Mary-Lou to do them for her instead.

Mary-

Lou was so gentle and kindly that she would do anything for anybody. Jean was very
 Lou doing the flowers in the common-room instead of Bill.

'Why are you doing this?' she demanded. 'You can see on the list it's Bill's week.'

'I know, Jean,' said Mary-

Lou, scared at Jean's sharp tone. 'But Bill did so badly want to go and give Thunder
 'I'm getting tired of Bill racing off to the stables, never joining in anything the third
 But she made no more impression on Bill than Miss Peters had done. Bill had spoken
 She would have been excellent at lacrosse if she had practised. She was magnificent.
 Bill could turn 'cart-

wheels' as easily as any clown in a circus, going over and over on hands and feet.
 'You'll only damage yourselves,' she said. But nobody else really wanted to turn somersaults.
 Bill could also walk on her hands, and the others often made her perform to them
 natured and natural, and didn't

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get her head in the least turned by all the praise and acclamation given to her for her room.

Zerelda watched and marvelled. She could not imagine how any girl could want to. Belinda did some beautiful drawings of Thunder. She was very good at drawing and Bill said, 'Belinda! They're simply marvellous! Please, please give them to me!'

'No,' said Belinda, tucking them away into her portfolio. 'I shall keep them with me.' 'Well, Belinda, do some specially for me,' Bill begged. 'Oh, Belinda, you might as well give them to me.'

'Gosh, Bill, you've got about six different photographs of horses there now,' said Bill. 'I shall give you one of them. I should put him right at the very front,' said Bill. 'Belinda, will you do me a drawing of Thunder?' 'Fibber!' said Belinda. 'The only person you'll do anything for is Thunder. You won't do it for me.' Bill looked taken aback. 'Am I really as bad as that?' she asked, anxiously. 'Is that all?' 'Of course,' said Belinda. 'Why, you don't even take on your own duties. I heard Jean say that but Mary-

Lou's going on doing them just the same. So you can't have a drawing of Thunder.'

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evening when you can't go to the stables, and that will make us crosser than ever. Belinda paused to take breath. Bill looked as if she was going to fly into a temper. 'Yes. You're right, Belinda. I don't like you being right, but you are,' she said, hotly. 'I'll do my duties after Jean had told me about it. I'll tell her I'll do them all next week.' 'Right,' said Belinda. 'I'll draw you a fine picture of Thunder, with you on his back.'

—
I shall jolly well take it away if you start being silly, because I'm only going to let you have it if you do. Bill laughed. She liked Belinda. She liked Irene, too. They both did the maddest, —

she only had a very bad photograph of him. Now she was going to get a lovely drawing of him. Jean quite thought that it was a belated result of her ticking off that made Bill off his duties the next week. She was pleased.

Belinda kept her word and gave Bill a beautiful picture of Thunder, done in black breeches and a yellow jersey. Bill was absolutely thrilled. She made Mary-Lou walk into the village with her to try to get it framed at once. She couldn't buy

photographs out of its frames on her dressing-table and put Thunder's picture in it, neatly trimmed to fit. Everyone admired it. 'Now you remember, Bill, it's not yours yet,' Belinda warned.

BILL AND MISS PETERS

find that picture gone!

But although Bill was better from that day in trying to do some of the things her f dream and not pay any attention to either Mam'zelle or Miss Peters.

Mam'zelle complained bitterly, 'This girl is not even polite! 1 say to her, "Wilhel except for "Le chevan Miss Peters, the only time 1 get that girl to turn round to fa Miss Peters began to punish Bill in the way she resented and hated most. 'Here is Or she would say, 'Wilhelmina, you have paid no attention in class this moring. Y Bill was angry and resentful—

and disobedient! She was not going to stop seeing Thunder for anyone in the wor Miss Peters did not even dream that Bill would disobey. 'One of these days she'll What with Bill and her horse, Zerelda and her ways, Irene and Belinda with their brains, and Mavis and her opera-singing, Miss Peters considered that she had the most trying form in the school. '1

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house-

mistress. They must drive her mad! Now I wonder when Wilhelmina is going to l

11 ALICIA HAS A PARCEL

THE days flew by. It was still very cold and Gwendoline and Mavis complained l room, or sat almost on top of the radiators.

'You should rush about a bit more in gym or on the lacrosse field,' said Darrell, w pink with good health and happiness. She had gone out to the field every moment Gwendoline looked at Darrell with her usual scowl. She really felt miserable in th air atmosphere of school. It annoyed her to see Darrell without a single chilblain, Belinda came slipping up behind Gwendoline, who was quite unaware that she w 'Look out? Here's Belinda again!'

Ciwen turned round quickly, trying to smooth the scowl off her face—

but it was difficult to feel angry and yet not scowl!

'Go away, Belinda! I don't want you to draw me!' she said, peevishly. T wish you —J call it really sly.'

'Oh no!' said Belinda. 'I'm just interested in you, that's all. You have such a lovely —

the ugliest in the whole school, I should think. Do, do scowl, Gwen, and let me di

Gwen stopped herself from scowling, but it was a very

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ALICIA HAS A PARCEL

great effort. Belinda grinned.

"Poor Gwendoline Mary—

so annoyed, that it makes her want to scowl more fiercely than ever—

but she won't! Well, never mind—I'll watch for the next time.'

She went away, and everyone laughed. Gwen's eyes filled with easy tears. She could—but that horrid Belinda thought it was a fine way to tease her.

Darrell came in after her lacrosse practice, glowing and beaming. 'I say, girls! Win team! Only the third reserve—but it's something!'

'What's a reserve?' asked Zerelda, thinking it must be something marvellous, judging

'Well—if three girls fall out from the next match-

team, I'd take the place of the third one,' explained Darrell.

'Third reserves never play,' remarked Alicia. 'Everybody knows that. So don't hope

'I'm not,' said Darrell. 'Alicia, I do wish you would get a bit of coaching too. Molly—takes no end of trouble.'

'That fat, clumsy Molly!' murmured Zerelda, in her lazy drawl. 'Gee—

I just can't bear to look at her!'

It was silly of Zerelda to say things like that. It made Darrell and Jean and the rest

'She may be fat, but she's not clumsy—

she's a fast runner and very powerful,' said Darrell, stoutly.

'I'll say she is!' said Zerelda. Tom met her running down the stairs the other day, and

You can keep your Mollies! I don't want them. All brawn and no brains or charm

'And you, I suppose, are all charm, and no brains?' said Alicia's smooth, malicious

Zerelda flushed scarlet and bit her lip. The others held their breath, expecting an answer

'I guess I asked for that,' said Zerelda, stiffly, and she got up. She said no more, but

Nobody said anything. They felt uncomfortable. It wasn't right to taunt a girl when

—but on the other hand Zerelda was really very annoying and deserved to be ticked

'Where's Bill?' asked Darrell, to change the subject.

'Where do you suppose?' said Belinda. 'Giving titbits in the stable.'

'Well, I wish she wouldn't,' said Jean. 'It's absolutely flat disobedience, and she'll listen—but she simply won't listen. I might as well talk to a stone wall.'

'She says Thunder isn't well," said Mary-Lou.

'Imagination!' scoffed Alicia. 'She just says that so that she can go and see him wi

'No. I am sure she really does think Thunder isn't well,' said Mary-

Lou, in her gentle voice. 'She's very worried about him.

'Well, why doesn't she ask Miss Peters to get the vet to him?' said Irene.

'Because if she does Miss Peters will want to know how she knows he's not well,'

Lou. 'And then the fat will be in the tire!'

'And there will be a sizzling noise and Miss Peters will go up in smoke!' said Beli

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ALICIA HAS A PARCEL

Miss Peters going up in smoke.

Somebody put their head in at the common-

room door. 'Hey there! Parcel post is in—and there's a parcel for you, Alicia.'

'Thanks,' said Alicia, and got up to go and get it. 'Hope it's some chocolates from
She disappeared. Belinda finished her drawing and handed it round. Everyone ye!

'Lovely!' said Darrell. 'I wish I could draw like you. I can't do anything like that!

'Yes, I am,' said Belinda, taking back her drawing, and adding a few more strokes

'And I should be very very miserable without my voice,' said Mavis at once.

'Yes. You'd be ten times more miserable than either Irene or Belinda,' said Jean. 'I

— like Belinda, who's pretty fair at everything besides being gifted at drawing. B

'I can't help having a voice that overpowers the rest of me,' said Mavis, complacent
singer I shall...'

This was the signal for everyone to begin talking at the tops of their voices. It did
cry. As they talked they laughed to see her annoyed face, its small dark eyes gleam

Well—

she didn't care! Wait till she was a bit older — then she would show the others w
formers!

Alicia came in with her parcel. 'It's not from my godmother,' she said, 'so don't cr
Sam was one of her brothers, a scamp if ever there was one. The third-
formers were never tired of hearing of his escapades.

is it some sort of joke to play, do you think?' asked Darrell, eagerly. 'Alicia, you l

Alicia opened the parcel. Out fell a small box. Belinda picked it up and looked at
'Sneeze, Boys, Sneeze!'

'Whatever does it mean?' said Darrell, thrilled. 'Let's open the box.'

'Well, look out then,' said Alicia, shaking out a letter from her brother. 'Don't spil
Darrell opened the box. It was full of little white pellets, round and flat, about hal
— "Sneeze, Boys, Sneeze!"?'

Alicia was reading Sam's letter and chuckling. 'Listen to this,' she said. 'Sam reall
—

he's a bit of an inventor in his way. What you do is to put a pellet on a shelf, dam

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Everyone laughed. 'Sam says he did it to his drawing master,' said Alicia, chuckling three times. The boys counted. What a joke!1

'Let's play it on Miss Peters!' said Darrell, thrilled. 'Oh, do let's!'

The idea of hearing the hearty Miss Peters sneezing forty-three times was very tempting. Alicia read Sam's letter to the end. 'He says on no vapour only floats out about four feet—

so if we do play the trick on Miss Peters, she will start sneezing her head off—but we shan't sneeze at all!'

'It sounds an absolutely super trick,' said Darrell. "Really super! Alicia, we must play it—almost louder than anyone else's in the school.'

'Well—

we mustn't begin to giggle too soon or giggle too much in case Miss Peters smells! Everyone felt really thrilled. A trick on Miss Peters! Very few third-

formers had ever dared to play jokes on her, for she was sharp, and so swift with

'When can we play it? Tomorrow?' asked Darrell.

'No. Wait till we've got a test in maths or something,' said Alicia. 'Then, if Miss P

12 THE DAYS GO BY

THE next excitement was that Sally came back! Darrell was overjoyed. She hugged him. 'It's good to be back! I did hate not coming at the beginning of the term!'

'Oh, Sally, I have missed you! There's lots to tell you.'

'You wrote awfully good letters. I'm longing to see Bill and Zerelda. Wasn't it a surprise? Everyone was pleased to see Sally back—

everyone that is, except Alicia. Alicia had got used to having Darrell for her companion—

and she might not even be able to share her! Darrell might not want to bother with her. So Alicia greeted Sally rather coolly, and made quite a show of being friendly with her. Well forgot all about Alicia for a few days, she was so pleased that Sally was back. There was so much news to exchange, so much to discuss. Sally marvelled at Zerelda. 'Oh, Darrell—

you don't know how good it is to be back again!' said Sally, happily. T kept on an
—working in class—
joking with Mam'zelle Dupont, and being ticked off by Mam'zelle Rougier—
and playing lacrosse.

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THE DAYS GO BY

and having fun in the gym, and roasting chestnuts by the fire in the common-room. I was absolutely homesick for school!

'Well, now you're back again at last,' said Darrell. 'I chummed up with Alicia who cough and isn't back yet, so she was on her own and so was I.'

Sally didn't very much like the idea of Darrell being friends with Alicia. She felt j

—
but it came slipping into her heart again now when she saw how friendly Alicia was. So Sally was as cool with Alicia as Alicia was cool with Sally, and Darrell was sure. Darrell told Sally about Alicia's proposed trick. Sally didn't seem to think it a good one. 'It's silly to play a trick like that on Miss Peters,' she said. * For one thing, she'll g

—
and for another thing I don't much like those tricks that make people have sneezes. 'Oh, Sally!' said Darrell, really disappointed. 'I thought you'd be so thrilled. Don't hurt Sally. 'All right—

if you like to think things like that of me, you can,' she said. 'I suppose you think I'm not—jolly, witty, amusing—all the things I'm not!'

Now it was Darrell's turn to look hurt. 'You're silly, Sally,' she said. "Yes, you are

Betty were away. Don't spoil things, Sally."

'All right. I'll try not to,' said Sally, with an effort. But jealousy is a very hard thing to fight. 'Oh dear!' sighed Darrell to herself one afternoon as she ran out for a lacrosse practice—and why has Sally changed so much? She is jealous, I know—

but does jealousy change people such a lot?'

Darrell wasn't at all jealous herself. It was not in her nature, so she couldn't really

'Well, I shan't think about either of them!' said Darrell, as she caught the lacrosse ball. Molly Ronaldson was really pleased with her. It was not only Darrell's swiftness—
—and Molly Ronaldson had no higher praise for anyone than that.

'Darrell Rivers, count yourself as third reserve for the third match-team,' she said, as she went off the field with Darrell.

'I'll put the notice up on the board this evening. There's always a chance you might

THE DAYS GO BY

often fall out by the dozen.'

'Oh, Molly—

thank you!' said Darrell, finding it quit difficult to speak, she was so overcome. 'I'll not miss a single practice, even if it snows! I say, I do think it's super of you!'

'No, it isn't really,' said Molly. 'I'm thinking of the team. You're good enough—so in you go—as reserve first, with a faint chance of playing in a match later on.' Darrell rushed indoors, walking on air. Luckily she didn't collide with Mam'zelle formers, who scattered in alarm at her headlong rush.

'Darrell Rivers! Are you mad?' said Lucy.

'No! Well, perhaps I am a bit!' said Darrell. 'I'm third reserve for the third match-team! Molly's just told me.'

'That's jolly good,' said Ellen. 'Congratulations! Lucky thing! I'll never be in any team, and I'm a fourth-former.'

Everyone seemed pleased and clapped Darrell on the back. She rushed to the third room to break the news there. Most of the girls were there, sitting about, reading, 'Here comes the hurricane!' said Alicia, with a grin. 'Shut the door, for goodness!' Darrell slammed the door. 'Girls, I'm third reserve!' she announced. 'Molly's putting me in! Alicia, who had been a little annoyed at Darrell's success at lacrosse that term, made no sound. She would hardly let Sally get near Darrell. Jean was pleased too, and Irene and I

Even Mary Lou added her bit, and Zerelda smiled and looked pleased, though secretly Sally was cross to see how pleased Alicia apparently was, and how Darrell welcomed the news. Darrell was rather surprised that Sally didn't seem as pleased as she had expected.

'Of course I'm pleased!' said Sally. 'It's—

it's fine. You've done jolly well, Darrell.'

But she didn't sound very whole-

hearted about it and Darrell felt faintly disappointed. Never mind! Alicia was thrilled

— and so were the others. Perhaps Sally was still feeling a bit out of things having come to this. The next excitement was a notice put up on the board, next to the notice about Darrell's appointment. The formers were to go to the art-room to be tried out for parts.

'Blow!' said Gwendoline, who didn't like Miss Hibbert because she had so often told

'Oh no, it isn't,' said Zerelda, who had brightened up very much at the notice. 'Act
'Yes, we know you did,' interrupted Daphne. 'We ought to know by now, anyway

THIRD YEAR AT MALORY TOWERS

'I suppose you fancy yourself in one of the chief parts, Daphne?' said Alicia. 'What if she can get rid of that American drawl!'

Zerelda looked alarmed. 'Do you think my way of speaking will stop me having a part?' 'Well—

I can't imagine Shakespeare's Juliet talking with a pronounced American accent,' —if you act the part well enough I don't see why you shouldn't get it!'

Zerelda had been rather subdued lately, but now she came to life again, with the help of the glass. She also tried to get rid of her American drawl!

This amused the class very much. Zerelda had never made the slightest attempt to do so. 'Well, try to say "wonderful" with the D in the middle, instead of "wunnerful", for "four" with the T in the middle, instead of "twermy-four". And couldn't you say "stop" instead of "starp" and "shop" instead of "sharp"? Zerelda patiently tried to master the English way of speaking, much to Miss Peter's surprise. 'Up in the air, and her habit of appearing to look down on the others just because they were not as good as she!' 'Now I'll show them all!' thought Zerelda, studying the part of Juliet with great attention.

13 ZERELDA'S UNFORTUNATE REHEARSAL

MISS HIBBERT took a great deal of trouble in producing the school plays. She gave a great deal of trouble to the girls. 'Does Miss Hibbert choose the characters the first time?' asked Zerelda.

'Oh no—

she tries us all out in almost every part several times,' said Darrell. 'She does that —she says that in that way she really does find the right actor for every part—and we all get to know every part of the play and work better as a team.'

'Gee, that's wunnerful—

I mean, wonderful,' said Zerelda. 'I've been studying Juliet's part. It's a lovely one.'

'Well—I'm just going out to my lacrosse practice,' said Darrell. 'Sorry! Look—ask Alicia. She's got nothing to do this period.'

But Alicia was not going to admire Zerelda's Juliet. She got up hastily. 'Sorry! I've got to go to my lacrosse practice. I'll hear you, Zerelda,' said Gwendoline, glad of an opportunity to please the American girl.

rooms, where you won't be disturbed. It will be lovely to see you act. I'm sure you—what's the star you like so

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much—oh yes, Lossie Laxton!

'Well, maybe I'm not up to her standard yet,' said Zerelda, fluffing up her hair in t—'we'll go to a practice-room,'

But they were all full, and music sounded from each of them, with the exception

'I say, Irene,' said Gwen, going in, 'can you...'

'Go away,' said Irene, fiercely. 'I'm busy. Can't you see?'

'Well, you're not needing the piano, are you?' said Zerelda. 'Can't you do your wo

'No, I can't. I shall want to try it out on the piano in a minute,' said Irene. 'Go awa

Zerelda was surprised. She had never seen Irene so annoyed before. But Gwendol

'Come on,' she said to Zerelda. 'Let's go.'

'Yes. GO!' said Irene, with a desperate expression on her face. 'You've stopped m

'Well, really, Irene, I do think you might let us use this room if you're only playin

Then Irene went quite mad. She threw her music, her pencil and her music-

case at the alarmed Zerelda. 'You're daft!' she shouted. 'Give up my music-

hour for your silly acting! Oh yes, I know you're going to be a wonderful film-st

rate things if ever you do have a thought in your head—

but what's all that compared to music! I tell you I'm...'

But Zerelda and Gwen did not wait to hear any more. They saw Irene looking

ZERELDA'S UNFORTUNATE REHEARSAL 81

Gwen thought the sooner they went out of the room the better.

'Weill' said Zerelda. Tftthat doesn't beat all! Irene'smad!'

'Not really,' said Gwen. 'It's only when she feels sort of inspired, and music come

'Well, so have I,' said Zerelda at once. 'But I don't go mad like that. I wouldn't hav

'She can't help it,' said Gwendoline. 'It's only when she's interrupted. Look—

there's Lucy going out of one of the practice-

rooms. We can have that one if we're quick!'

They slipped into the room that Lucy had just left. Gwendoline sat down, ready to

'Wilt thou be gone? It is a not yet near day; It was the nightingale and not the lark
tree; Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.'

Gwendoline listened with a rapt and admiring expression on her face. She had no

'It's marvellous!' she said, when Zerelda at last stopped for breath. 'However have

'Do I?' said Zerelda, pleased. She always enjoyed herself when she was acting. T

it's not big enough. The curtain will do!'

To Gwendoline's amusement Zerelda took down the blue curtain and swathed it r

shoulder. She decided to put the tablecloth round her too. Ah— now she felt more like Juliet. Holding her hands out pathetically in front of her sh Gwendoline wanted to laugh but she knew how offended Zerelda would be. The . Someone looked in. It was Bessie, a second-former. She had come to practice. But seeing two third-formers there, she fled. Then a fourth-former came. She was not scared of third-formers, but was very much astonished to see Zerelda and her strange raiment. 'I've got to practise,' she said, coming in. 'Clear out' Zerelda stopped indignantly. 'Clear out yourself!' she said. 'Gee, of all the nerve! 'No, I can't,' said the fourth-former. 'And wait till a mistress sees you in that curtain— you'll be for it, Zerelda Brass. Clear out now, both of you. I'm late already.' Zerelda decided to go all temperamental like Irene. She caught up her book of Sh former. Most unfortunately at that moment Matron came by, and, as she always d room to see that each girl there was practising. She was filled with astonishment t She opened the door sharply, making everyone jump. 'What's all this? What are y

ZERELDA'S UNFORTUNATE REHEARSAL

former is practising. As for you, Zerelda, if I see any more tempers like that, I shall have to have you in the first form if you behave like that!

The girls couldn't get a word in, for Matron fired all this off at top speed. She pushed her through the door and said, 'You'll just come with me and let me find out if you've torn the cloth or the curtain—'

if you don't darn your stockings better than you have been doing, I shall have to have you in the first form. Angry and embarrassed, poor Zerelda had to walk down the corridor after Matron. But Matron would give her no time to rearrange or tidy herself. This stuck-up, affected American girl had annoyed Matron so often—

now Matron was getting a bit of her own back! Let everyone see Zerelda in this ridiculous dress! And most unfortunately for Zerelda they met a whole batch of giggling second-formers, who stared at Zerelda in delighted amazement.

'What's she done? Where's Matron taking her? Doesn't she look awful! Poor Zerelda!'

They met Mam'zelle at the bend of the stairs, and Mam'zelle exclaimed in surprise. 'Yes. I'm dealing with her, Mam'zelle,' said Matron firmly. She and Mam'zelle went on.

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Matron did not stop to talk, but swept Zerelda along to her room at top speed, leaving a trail of dust. Fortunately for Zerelda, Matron could find no damage done to either the tablecloth or the room. Matron plaited Zerelda's hair into two fat plaits! Zerelda had never had her hair plaited before. This awful school! Whatever would happen to her next?

'There,' said Matron, satisfied at last, tying the ends of the plaits with blue tape. She

— and very sensible and nice too. Why you want to go about pretending you are two people? Zerelda got up weakly. She caught a glimpse of herself in the glass. How awful! (

— just like all the other English girls. She crept out of Matron's room and fled up to her dormitory. She met Miss Peters, who stared at her as if she didn't know her. Zerelda smiled at her. 'Well—

ZereldaV she heard Miss Peters say, as if she couldn't believe her eyes. Zerelda smiled. 'Gwendoline was in the dormy, and she too stared at Zerelda as if she was seeing a ghost. 'Did Matron do that to you?' she asked. 'Oh, Zerelda

— you look like a real schoolgirl now—

not a bit like yourself. Oh, I must tell the others that Matron plaited your hair.'

'If you dare to repeat such a thing I'll never speak to you again!' said Zerelda, in a

14 BILL IS CAUGHT!

ALICIA had not been allowed to forget the sneezing trick. All the form begged her to

— except Sally. Sally still said she thought it was a dangerous joke to play, but Alicia said, 'You only say that because it's my trick!' she said, knowing that Sally was jealous. Jean was torn between her desire to see the trick played and her feeling that as he was a girl she ought not to be too encouraging. Still, head-girls couldn't be too strict and prim—and she did badly want to see what would happen!

'There's to be a maths test next week,' said Alicia. 'That's the time to do it! I bet with a w

Everyone laughed. Darrell hugged herself. Oh, school was such fun! She enjoyed—oh, everything was wonderful! This was the nicest term she had ever had. Then she saw Bill looking anything but happy. Poor Bill! She was worried because—
—
but Bill knew. Thunder wasn't just homesick, as she had thought at first. He wasn't—
—
and the more worried she got, the less attention she paid to her work, and the crosser she got. 'Wilhelmina! Will you please pay attention! Wilhelmina! Will you repeat what I

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It was dreadful. Bill was really very miserable now, but she said very little unless a suspicion came into Miss Peter's mind. Was Bill being disobedient? Surely not. She spoke about it to Miss Potts, who was in charge of North Tower, 'I'm puzzled by that little-headed little thing! Then, too, she seems so fond of that horse of hers—and yet although she knows I shall punish her by forbidding her to see him, she goes on as if nothing had happened.' Miss Potts looked startled. She frowned, trying to remember something clearly, 'No—no—that's funny—
—
I could swear I saw Wilhelmina in the stables yesterday when I went by, I looked—and I'm almost certain it was Wilhelmina—standing beside a big black horse.'
"Yes—
—
that would be Thunder,' said Miss Peters, grimly. 'The untrustworthy, disobedient—and being disobedient like that.'
Miss Peters was really very angry. She never could bear

Darrell and Bill tried to hide

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to be disobeyed. She went back to her room, feeling shocked and disappointed. So Miss Peter felt more and more indignant about the whole thing as the day wore on. At last, at five o'clock, the master, each took the third form for a lesson. She had no chance of looking sharp. After dinner that morning there was about half an hour before afternoon school. Then she slipped off to the stables by a path under the trees, so that, unless she was very careful, no one would see her. She slipped off to the stables as usual to see Thunder. He whinnied softly when he saw her. She went to Thunder's stall. He put his great black head into the crook of her arm—
—
and I don't like the feel of your coat. It should be much silkier. It's harsh. Thunder

Thunder blew a little, and whinnied happily. He didn't feel well, certainly—but that didn't matter when Bill was with him. He could feel ill and yet be happy :
Upstairs in North Tower, Miss Peters walked along the corridor. She meant to fin

BILL IS CAUGHT!

her. She went to the door of the third-form common-room and looked in. Wilhelmina was not there!

'I want Wilhelmina,' said Miss Peters. 'Where is she?'

Everybody knew, of course. But nobody was going to tell. Darrell wondered if she should say, 'Shall I go and find her for you?' she said.

'No. I'll find her,' said Miss Peters. 'Does anyone know where she is?'

Nobody answered. They all looked blank in a most irritating way. Miss Peters felt—
—in the stables!

'I suppose she is in the stables,' said Miss Peters, grimly.

She looked at Jean. 'You, as head-

girl, Jean, ought to tell her not to be so foolish and dishonourable. You know I put Jean went red and looked uncomfortable. It was all very well for Miss Peters to tell her to 'Stay here, all of you,' commanded Miss Peters, feeling sure that one or other might say, 'Oh, poor Bill!' groaned Darrell, when Miss Peters had gone. 'Now she'll get into the stables—'

I bet Miss Peters has gone down the front stairs. If I race down the back ones, I may find her. She didn't wait to hear what anyone had to say. She shot out of the room, almost by the back door and out under the trees.

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She shot over to the stable door and squeezed through it.

'Bill! Look out! Miss Peters is coming here!' she hissed. She saw Bill's startled face. Then she heard footsteps and groaned. 'It's too late—
—you'll be caught. Can't you hide?'

Darrell shot under a pile of straw and lay there, her heart beating wildly. Bill stood up. 'Oh! So you are here, Wilhelmina!' she said, angrily. 'I suppose you have been saying that to her. 'No! Oh no, Miss Peter! Don't, don't do that!' begged Bill, even her freckles going pink. 'I'm not going to discuss the matter,' said Miss Peters, coldly. 'You have heard what she said in the room, Wilhelmina. I will tell you when I have made arrangements to send Thunderson by to him till the holidays. It will probably be the day after tomorrow.'

Bill stood still, quite petrified. She couldn't make her legs move. Darrell couldn't move. 'Go, Wilhelmina,' said Miss Peters. 'At once please.'

And Bill went, her feet dragging. Darrell heard a smothered sob. Oh dear—
—what a pity she had to hide under this straw and couldn't go and comfort Bill. Never

Miss Peters would soon be going, and then Darrell could fly up to the common rc

BILL IS CAUGHT!

But Miss Peters didn't go. She waited till Bill had quite gone. Then she went over Darrell could hardly believe her ears. She wriggled a little in the straw so that she Miss Peters gave Thunder some sugar and he crunched it up. Then she went out c She opened the door and went out—

and then she stood still, thunderstruck. Miss Peters hadn 't gone! She was just out lace! She looked up and saw Darrell coming out of the stables.

She stood up, red with rage. 'What were you doing in there?' she demanded. 'Wer room when 1 left. Did you actually dare to run down the back stairs to warn Wilh Darrell couldn't speak. She nodded. 'I shall deal with you later,' said Miss Peters,

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15 MAVIS HAS AN IDEA

BILL would not be comforted by Darrell or anyone else. She hadn't gone to the c room as Miss Peters had told her to. She had gone to the dormy and wept by hers But she couldn't help it now. When she appeared for afternoon school the third-formers saw her red eyes and came round her to comfort her. But she pushed ther 'Thank you for coming to warn me. It was decent of you, Darrell,'

'Bill—it's a shame,' began Darrell. But Bill turned away.

'I can't talk about it,' she said. 'Please don't.'

So the third-

formers gave it up, and looked at one another helplessly, You simply couldn't do

—
and everything had been so lovely up till then. Now she had got herself into troubl Miss Peters was in a grim mood that afternoon. She was looking out for anyone o All the third-formers felt miserable that evening, with Bill

sitting like a figure of stone in a corner. It was Mavis who suddenly livened them 'I say,' she said, in a whisper, as if somebody was listening who shouldn't be there She held up a paper. On it was printed these words:

TALENT SPOTTING!

Have you a gift? Can you play the piano well?

Can you draw? Do you sing?

Then bring your talent to the Grand Hall, Billington, on

Saturday night, and let us SPOT your TALENT.
Big prizes—and a CHANCE to make your NAME!
TALENT SPOTTING!

The girls read it. 'Well, what about it?' said Alicia. 'Surely you are not thinking of
'Yes, but listen,' said Mavis, still in an urgent whisper, 'what about Irene going wi
—and Belinda with her drawing—and Zerelda with her acting—
and me with my Voice? Think what prizes we would win!'

Everyone stared at Mavis scornfully. 'Mavis! As if we'd ever be allowed to go!' s
rate affair like this? Talent spotting indeed! Just a silly show put on to amuse the
crowns! Don't be so silly.'

'But, Belinda—Zerelda—

it's such a chance!' said Mavis, who had imagined herself standing on the platfor
-just a village affair got up for fun.

'Mavis, you're just too silly for words,' said Alicia, impatiently. 'Can you honestly
sense.'

'She can't. She hasn't got any,' said Daphne. Mavis

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MAVIS HASAN IDEA

snatched the paper from Darrell, who was reading down it with a grin. 'All right,' 'Don't be a fathead,' said Jean. 'Think of yourself standing up on a big platform, just like a singer! But it didn't seem a ridiculous picture to Mavis. She could see it all very clearly. A singer!

She stuffed the notice into her pocket, wishing she hadn't said anything about it. 'Suppose I go? Nobody would miss me if I said I was going for an extra lesson in singing. It was a very exciting thought. Today was Thursday. Mavis decided to think about it—then she could make her plans in good time if she decided to go!

She thought about it all day Friday. And Bill thought about Thunder. Neither of them did any work for the school that day, having to take duty for another teacher who was ill. Bill had not dared to go to the stables again. She was hoping against hope that Miss Peters still had not said anything to Darrell. The girl wished she would get it straight—
—but not keep it hanging over like this. Perhaps that was part of Miss

Peters' plan though, to keep Darrell on tenterhooks for a few days!

Saturday came. Mavis had made up her mind. She would go! She would tell Miss Peters about her extra lesson. She often had extra singing at odd times, so Miss Potts would not think it odd. So Mavis made her plans. She looked up the buses. She meant to catch the six o'clock bus. She could easily go into the hall and find out what she had to do.

She looked up the buses back. How long would the show last? About two hours, just before past nine—

the last one. Goodness, it was late! Mavis began to have a few qualms about her plan. Oh dear—would it be moonlight? She did hope so!

Bill came over to Darrell on Saturday morning. 'Darrell! Would you do something for me—just in case Miss Peters might change her mind about sending Thunder away

—so would you please, Darrell, slip down there yourself and go to Thunder and see if he is all right. 'Yes, of course,' said Darrell. 'He wasn't out with the other horses this morning. I don't know. 'No, he wouldn't be,' said Bill. 'Nobody rides him but me. Do go, Darrell'

Darrell went. It didn't matter her going in the least. She kicked herself for not having gone sooner. She went into the stables. All the horses were there. One of the grooms was there

THIRD YEAR AT MALORY TOWERS

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between his teeth as he did so.

"Morning, Miss," he said.

'Good morning,' said Darrell. 'Where's Thunder? Is he all right?'

'He's over there in his stall, Miss,' said the groom, standing up. 'He doesn't seem to be. Colic? That was tummy-

ache, wasn't it, thought Darrell. Oh well, that wasn't anything very much. She went back.

'He really doesn't seem very well, does he?' said Darrell, anxiously. 'Do you suppose he's got colic?'

'Well, he may be,' said the groom. 'But it's his insides are making him miserable, Miss.'

Darrell said no more. She ran back to North Tower to find Bill, who was anxious.

'Thunder doesn't seem very well,' she said. 'But you needn't worry. The groom said he was all right.'

Bill stared at her in horror. 'Colic! Why, it's one of the worst things a horse can have.'

'Oh—I didn't know,' said Darrell. 'But—surely it isn't as serious as all that, is it?'

'It is, it is,' said Bill, and tears came into her eyes. 'Oh, what shall I do? I daren't go.'

'You can't do anything,' said Darrell. 'Really you can't. He'll be all right tomorrow morning—

practise catching again."

Bill turned away. Rain! What did rain matter! She sat down in a corner and began to think—

—suppose Thunder got very ill in the middle of the night—and nobody knew? The grooms did not sleep very near the stables. Nobody would notice. Whilst Bill tortured herself with these horrible thoughts, Mavis delighted herself with

—by that time she could have been received with wonder and applause, and Malory would say, 'How bold she is to do a thing like that!' they would say. Must be the kind of thing a singer would do! All fire and temperament and boldness! Wonderful Mavis!

Nobody had any suspicion of Mavis's mad plans that night. Miss Potts said nothing about it, and would be having her supper early to make time for it. The girls took no notice. 'It's all too easy for words!' thought Mavis, exultantly. 'I shall easily be able to catch

—they'll know I am something besides just a Voice!

She caught the bus easily. It was pouring with rain but she had her mackintosh with her, so her head was bare. But as the bus stopped just by the Grand Hall at Rillington Place, the bus started off with a jolt. Off to fame! Off to applause! Off to the Beginning

WHERE IS MAVIS?

16 WHERE IS MAVIS?

MISS POTTS noticed that Mavis was not at the supper-table. She was about to remark on it when she remembered that Mavis had told her lesson. She must have had supper early then, as she sometimes did when Mr. Younker was out. The girls thought nothing of it either. They were used to Mavis and her continual training now. They hardly missed her. As they often said, Mavis was really nothing. Bill was very silent and worried, and ate hardly anything. Warm-hearted Darrell felt sorry for her. She knew she was worrying about Thunder and 'Shall I go and have a look at him for you after supper?' Bill shook her head. 'No. I don't want to get you into trouble. Nobody's allowed in the room after supper. No one said anything about Mavis not being in the common-room after supper. Alicia switched on the wireless. Belinda began to do a ridiculous dance. She was pleased at the girls' applause. 'Shall I act a bit of "Romeo and Juliet" for you?' 'Yes, do, Zerelda!' said Gwen, at once. The others were not so keen, but they sat tight. Zerelda began. She struck a pose, lifted up her voice and began to speak and act in

English way.

The result was so very comical that the girls roared with laughter. They thought that Zerelda was being funny. 'What are you laughing at? This part is very tragic and sad.'

Still the girls thought that Zerelda was being funny, and they laughed again. 'Go on, Zerelda. I'm not being comical,' said Zerelda.

'Do go on,' begged Irene. 'Come on—I'll be Romeo. We'll rag the whole thing.'

'I'm not ragging,' said Zerelda. 'I was playing the part properly—as I thought it ought to be played.'

The girls looked at her in surprise. Did she really mean it? Did she honestly think that? They didn't know what to say. They could, however, quite well imagine what Miss Potts would say to a struck person who thought they could act. Zerelda was appalling. She flung her hands up. 'She can't act for toffee!' whispered Alicia to Darrell. 'What are we to say?'

Fortunately the door was opened at that moment and a fourth-former came in to borrow a gramophone record. Zerelda, offended with everyone, —and she was worth the whole lot put together.

When the bell rang at nine o'clock Mavis was not back. Jean noticed it at once. 'V

'She said she had a singing-lesson,' said Darrell. 'But

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WHERE IS MAVIS?

what a long one it must have been! Well, she'll come along when Mr. Young's fire
 'He's never as late as this,' said Jean, puzzled. 'I wonder if I ought to tell Miss Potts
 'No, don't. She may be messing about somewhere, and you'll get her into trouble,'
 But she wasn't. The girls undressed and got into bed. Jean did not allow talking at
 'I say! You don't think, do you, that that idiot of a Mavis has gone off to that tale
 —the thing at Billington Grand Hall.'

There was a silence. Then Alicia spoke. 'I shouldn't be a bit surprised! She's quite
 'Well!' said Jean, angrily. 'She'll just have to be reported then. Honestly, she's the
 'We can't do much just now,' said Darrell. 'She may be back at any minute. I forgot
 past eight bus back and be here just after half-
 past nine. It must be nearly that now. You'll have to report her tomorrow morning
 —what a perfect idiot she must be, if she really has gone!'

'What I'm afraid of,' said Jean, 'is that they might let her get up on the platform and
 —

and, you know, she really has got such a wonderful voice that it would be bound to
 —and that's just what Mavis would love—
 cheering and clapping and applause! She'll be worse than ever if that happens—
 and she won't care a bit about being reported and punished.'

'Leave it till tomorrow morning,' said Darrell, sleepily. 'She'll be along soon. Tick-

Miss Potts heard the voices in the dormy and was surprised. She came to the door
 —

but at she heard Jean's clear voice say 'Now, no more talking girls', at that moment
 The girls were tired. Jean tried to keep awake to tick off Mavis, but she couldn't.
 —

except Bill. Bill hadn't heard a word about Mavis. She was wrapped up in her own
 Darrell too was asleep. She had meant to have a last comforting whisper with Bill
 Mavis didn't come. Ten o'clock struck, and eleven. No Mavis. All the girls were asleep
 'I can't go to sleep! I simply can't! I shall lie awake till the morning. If only I knew
 She lay and thought for a few minutes. She remembered a window that overlooked
 Bill got out of bed, and felt for her dressing-
 gown and slippers. She put them on. She groped her way to the door, bumping ag-

She thought it was Mavis coining back. She sat up and whispered loudly. 'Mavis!

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WHERE IS MAVIS?

No answer. The door softly opened and shut. Somebody had gone out, not come in. Darrell got her torch and switched it on. The first thing she saw was Bill's empty stall. She went to the door and opened it. She thought she saw something a good distance away. Bill had gone to the window that overlooked the stables. She opened it, and Darrell saw him. Her heart went cold! From the stables came a groaning and a stamping. There was a horse in pain. She turned away from the window and jumped violently when Darrell put a hand on her shoulder. 'Oh, Darrell—I was listening to see if any noise came from the stables over there

— and there's a horse in pain. I'm sure it's Thunder. I must go to him! Oh, Darrell, please! 'All right,' said Darrell, unhappy to hear Bill's tearful voice. 'I'll come. Come back when you're ready.' 'Gowns.'

Bill didn't want to stop to put anything on, but Darrell made her. The two girls put on their gowns and ran across in the pouring rain. Darrell could hear a horse groaning and s

light the lamp.

Both girls felt better when the light streamed out into the dark stable, that smelt of horse. Thunder's eyes were big and frightened. He hung his head in misery. From his box he called away thunder.

"Yes. He's got colic. He's bad Darrell. Oh, Darrell, we mustn't let him lie down. Try to walk him about? Where?" asked Darrell, in astonishment. 'In the stables?'

'No. Outside. It's the only thing to do, keep him walking so that he can't lie down. But it is a very difficult thing to prevent a big horse from lying down if he wants to

— but fortunately he decided to stand up a little longer and nuzzle against Bill. He was crying bitterly. 'Oh, Thunder! What can I do for you? Don't lie down, Thunder! You ought to have the vet, Bill, oughtn't you?' said Darrell, anxiously. 'How can I get the vet? 'Could you possibly ride over and fetch him?' said Bill, wiping her eyes with the back of her hand. '—not far off, really.'

'No, I couldn't,' said Darrell. 'I don't ride well enough to get a horse and gallop off to the vet. 'I can't leave him even for a minute!' said Bill. She seemed quite unable to think of anything else. An idea came into her head. She touched Bill on the shoulder. 'Bill! Stay here and

A MIDNIGHT RIDE

17 A MIDNIGHT RIDE

DARRELL raced off into the rain. She had thought of something but she didn't want to wake up Miss Peters and tell her about Thunder! She remembered she was going to wake up Miss Peters and tell her about Thunder! She remembered she went indoors. She made her way to Miss Peters' room, stumbling through the dark. There was no answer. She rapped again. Still no answer. Miss Peters must sleep. Miss Peters was lying humped up in bed, fast asleep. She slept very soundly indeed. Miss Peters awoke at once then. She sat up and stared at Darrell in amazement. "Darrell would have gone to Miss Potts or Matron in the usual way—but this was something so unusual that the girl felt only Miss Peters could deal with it. 'It's Thunder. He's got colic and Bill's afraid he'll die if he lies down. Can you get

'Good gracious! Have you and Bill been out to the stables at this time of night?' said Miss Peters. It was past twelve. She sprang out of bed. She pulled on riding-breeches and jersey and riding-coat, for she had been riding that day with the school, and her things lay ready to hand. 'Yes,' said Darrell. 'But don't be angry, Miss Peters — we simply had to go when we heard Thunder in pain.' 'I'm not angry,' said Miss Peters. 'I was worried myself about Thunder today. I ran out in a few minutes she was in the stables with Darrell. Bill was amazed to see her, but I told him. 'Oh, Miss Peters— can we get the vet to come now? I'm so afraid Thunder will lie down and we won't be able to get him. Thunder's insides gave a most alarming rumble just then and he groaned in pain again.' 'Darrell! Go quickly and get sou'westers for yourself and Bill. Then take the horse to the vet. Darrell flew off. She came back with the sou'westers. She had to put Bill's on her. 'I'm going to phone now,' said Miss Peters. 'Walk him out, Bill.' She went. She telephoned the vet's house. The sleepy

A MIDNIGHT RIDE

voice of his housekeeper answered her. 'I'm sorry, Mam
— but the vet has gone to Raglett's farm to a cow. He said he'd sleep there for the
—

I'm afraid they're not on the telephone. You can't get the vet tonight. I'm sorry.'
Miss Peters put down the receiver. Couldn't get the vet! What was to be done? Th
She went out to the stables again. In the yard the two girls were walking Thunder
'He's at Raglett's farm,' said Miss Peters. 'That's about five miles off, on the Billin
"What! In the dark and the rain?" said Darrell, hardly able to believe her ears.

'That's nothing,' said Miss Peters. 'Thunder is a lovely horse—
I don't mind what I do for him.'

Bill's hand groped for Miss Peters' arm. She was sobbing. 'You are good!' she said
Miss Peters patted Bill's shoulder. 'I'll do my best. Don't worry, Bill!'

Darrell was struck with surprise. Miss Peters had called Bill Bill. Gracious! And
Miss Peters was soon galloping off into the night. The two girls took it in turns to

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THIRD YEAR AT MALORY TOWERS

A MIDNIGHT RIDE

'Darrell—

I do feel so awful now to remember all the horrid things I thought about Miss Peters. 'No. I don't suppose you will,' said Darrell. 'I think she's fine. Golly—won't the girls be thrilled to hear about all this tomorrow!'

Miss Peters was riding fast through the night. The rain beat down on her but she was a weather person, and thought nothing of rain, wind, snow or fog! She galloped off. There was a light in one of the sheds. Miss Peters guessed the vet was there with the farmer. The farmer came to the door in surprise. Miss Peters hailed him in her loud, deep voice. 'He's in yonder,' said the farmer. Miss Peters dismounted and went into the shed. 'Mr. Turnbull,' said Miss Peters, 'if you've finished here, could you possibly come out?' 'Right,' said the vet, getting up. 'I've finished here, as it happens—much earlier than I thought. I'll come along now. I'll get my horse. Well, Raggett, —and she's got two of the prettiest calves I ever saw!'

Presently the vet and Miss Peters were riding back over the road to Malory Towers. As they came here Miss Peters' horse suddenly shied and reared.

'Hey there! Whoa! What's the matter?' cried Miss Peters and at the same moment

she saw a dark shape on the road. It was a dark shape, hardly visible in the darkness of the night.

'Mr. Turnbull. Come here!' yelled Miss Peters. 'I think there's somebody here. I heard a noise.' The vet had a powerful torch. He switched it on. The beam played over a huddled shape on the ground —a bundle with a mackintosh on!

'Good heavens! It's a young girl!' said the vet. 'Is she hurt?'

He picked the girl up. Miss Peters gave a loud and horrified exclamation. 'It's Mavis! She's fainted from exhaustion I think,' said the vet. 'Doesn't seem to have any bones broken.' Mavis looked up and saw Miss Peters. She began to cry weakly. 'They wouldn't let me go! I'm all wet! What is she talking about?' said the vet. 'Look, she's wet through! She'll get pneumonia if she stays out. Amazed, horrified and distressed, Miss Peters helped to lift Mavis on to the vet's horse. They came to Malory Towers. 'If Mavis can walk I'll take her straight in to Matron.' The vet disappeared in the direction of the stables. Miss Peters guided the exhausted girl and dragged her up the stairs to Matron's room.

Matron awoke and opened her door in surprise. She exclaimed in horror when she

Where has she been? She's soaked through and shivering. Miss Peters, there's an
'Goodness knows,' said Miss Peters, doing all the things she had been asked to do
water bottles, whilst Matron prepared some hot cocoa.

Mavis tried to tell her what had happened. She spoke in a poor croaking voice. 'I
—to that talent spotting concert—

but they said they couldn't let schoolgirls enter. I tried and tried to make them let
'Now, don't talk any more,' said Matron gently. 'You drink this cocoa and go to sleep.
Miss Peters had slipped out of the room, murmuring something about seeing to a
Miss Peters went down to the others. Bill and Darrell had welcomed the vet with
—

off you go to bed. I'll stay with him till morning. Miss Peters will help me. Off you

18 NEXT MORNING

BILL hadn't wanted to leave Thunder, of course. But Miss Peters spoke to her firm
—

you must leave matters to us. You know that we shall do our best for the horse, and
'Yes, I will,' said Bill, unexpectedly. She took Miss Peters' hand in hers and held it
—I can never repay you. Never. But I'll never forget tonight and all you did.'

Miss Peters patted Bill on the back. 'That's all right. I'm not asking for any repayment.
'You won't,' said Bill, her white face gleaming in the lamplight. 'I'll be your—
your very best pupil from now on, Miss Peters!'

'Well—

that will be a wonderful repayment,' said Miss Peters, smiling. 'Now do go, both of you.
'Oh no!' protested both girls. 'We couldn't bear it.'

'All right. I can't bear it either,' said Miss Peters. 'You can go to bed early instead
—or rather, good morning! It's nearly three o'clock!'

The two girls stumbled into North Tower, yawning. They hardly said a word to one

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THIRD YEAR AT MALORY TOWERS

NEXT MORNING

'Darrein I know you're Sally's friend, so you can't be mine. But I'm yours for ever'
'That's all right,' said Darrell, sleepily and was asleep almost at once.

In the morning, what a to-

do! Darrell and Bill slept so soundly that not even the bell awoke them. When Jean
'Darrell! Bill! I say, what's the matter with them both! Wake up, you two, the bell
— we want to tell you something. Mavis isn't back! Her bed is empty!'

The rest of the girls were talking excitedly about Mavis's non-
appearance. Jean was very worried. She felt that she ought to have reported the ni
'I must go to Miss Potts at once,' she said and she rushed off. But Miss Potts knew
Jean listened to all this in amazement. 'Did Mavis—
did she go to Billington?' she asked.

'Oh! So you know about that too,' said Miss Potts, grimly. 'Funny sort of head-
girl you are, Jean, not to have reported that Mavis was not in the dormitory last ni
Jean went white. 'I fell asleep,' she said miserably, 'I was going to wait till the last
—and if Mavis

didn't come in then I was going to come and report. But I fell asleep.',,

'A lame excuse,' said Miss Potts, who was angry with herself for not having popp
'Can we see Mavis?' asked Jean.

'Certainly not,' said Miss Potts. 'She is seriously ill. She got soaked through, and t
—

and we are hoping it won't turn to anything worse. Her throat is terribly bad, too
—she can hardly whisper.'

Jean went back to the third form dormy feeling guilty and alarmed. She found the
formers gathered round Darrell listening excitedly to her tale of the night before.

'Listen...' said Jean. But nobody listened. They were all agape at Darrell's amazing
'But—

would you believe Miss Peters could be so utterly decent?' said Belinda, in surpri
'It was a night!' said Darrell. 'Bill and I must have walked miles and miles with Tl
Footsteps raced up the corridor to the dormy. Bill burst in, her face glowing. 'Dar
past seven, and Miss Peters stayed till now. She never went to bed again!'

'Golly! She's wonderful,' said Alica, seeing Miss Peters in an entirely new light. 'I

'We never thought of anything like that,' said Bill. 'We only thought of Thunder. I

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THIRD YEAR AT MALORY TOWERS

NEVI MORMM,

feel so happy. Thunder's all right. He's not going to be sent home. Everything's fine. 'You will!' said Alicia. 'You'll sit and look out of the window and dream in class, I shan't,' said Bill, earnestly. 'Don't tease me, Alicia. I feel a bit queer though I feel—'—and he loves her, too, fancy that!—

I shall feel quite different about everything. I might even let her ride him.'

Jean at last got a word in. 'Listen to me now!' she said, and she told the third-formers about Mavis. They listened in horrified silence. Darrell burst out at once. 'Gracious! So Miss Peters didn't only save Thunder last night—

she saved Mavis, too. But I say—

fancy Mavis trying to walk home all those miles in the dark by herself. She's afraid. The girls were happy about Bill and Thunder, but upset about Mavis. They stood up. 'I say! What are you all thinking of? Aren't you coming to breakfast? The bell's gone!' 'Oh dear! Come on, everyone,' said Jean. 'I feel all in a whirl.'

The news about Thunder and about Mavis spread all through the school, and was all over by tea-time. It was Sunday so there were no classes. In the school chapel, where the service was

thought Jean, it was all her fault!

By the next morning, however, Mavis had taken a turn for the better. Thunder, too. The girls settled down to their classes on Monday, glad that Mavis was better. Jean said Miss Peters had had a good rest on the Sunday, and was taking the third form as usual. 'Hurrah for Miss Peters!' cried Darrell's voice, and to the amazement of the forms. 'Thank you,' she said. 'That was nice of you. Now

— open your books at page forty-one. Alicia, come up to the blackboard, please.' Darrell looked with interest at Bill several times that morning. Bill didn't gaze out of the window. 'Very good, Bill,' said Miss Peters, and a gasp went round the class. Miss Peters had been so kind to him. Darrell admired her as she watched her in class after class. Bill had made up her mind

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made up her mind to do it.

'I suppose that's what Daddy would call strength of character,' thought Darrell. 'Happily Miss Peters knew that Bill meant to repay her for that, too. She trusted Bill now.' 'I don't like of-doors and adored horses. They had disliked one another very much indeed—

but now they were going to be firm friends. That would be nice for Bill.

'Darrell! Are you day-

dreaming?' said Miss Peters' voice. 'You don't seem to have written down anything'
Darrell jumped and went red. Gracious! Here she was admiring Bill for being abl

and she, Darrell, had fallen into the same fault herself! She pulled herself together

That afternoon Miss Hibbert was going to take the first rehearsal of the play in the
room. This was often used for dramatic work because it had a small platform. Zer

'Zerelda!' she said, sharply. 'What are you saying to Gwendoline?'

'Nothing, Miss Peters,' said Zerelda, surprised.

'Well, what were you saying to yourself then?' demanded Miss Peters. 'Stand up v

M:\IORMM;

Zerelda stood up. She looked at Miss Peters and recited dramatically what she had
'Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day; It was the nightingale and not ..."

A volley of laughter from everyone in the class drowned her voice. Miss Peters re-

ATTHE REHEARSAL

19 AT THE REHEARSAL

AFTER the dinner hour that day the third-formers brought up the subject of Alicia's trick again.

"You know, Alicia—

I don't somehow feel as if I want it played on Miss Peters now,' said Bill.

'Nor do I,' said Darrell.

'I don't want it played at all,' said Sally, stoutly.

'Well, you're the only one that doesn't,' said Alicia. 'So keep quiet. What does even

7 don't quite like to play it on Miss Peters now,' said Belinda. 'I feel like Bill and

—

it seems a bit odd to give three cheers for somebody and then the very next day p

7 shouldn't mind,' said Zerelda, who hadn't liked being ticked off in class that mo

'I agree with Zerelda,' said Gwen's voice. 'Why shouldn't we? Don't you agree, D

'I don't know,' said Daphne, who had been rather struck with Miss Peters' dramat

—'I think on the whole I'd rather play it on Mam'zelle—or Miss Carton, perhaps.'

'Well, I don't much care who we play it on,' said Alicia. 'Darrell and I will agree t

'Darrell and you!' exclaimed Sally. 'What's Darrell got to do with it? It's your trick

'Oh, we've just been planning it out together that's all,' said Alicia, coolly, please

—but she knew quite well that Alicia

was only saying that to make Sally cross. Bother them both. Why couldn't they al

— Betty was coming back soon. Then perhaps Alicia would stop teasing Sally an

'Well—let's play the trick on Mam'zelle then,' said Irene.

"Mam'zelle's lovely to play tricks on. We haven't played one
on her for terms and terms.' |

'Right. Mam'zelle it shall be," said Alicia. 'Do you agree,

Darrell? We'll talk about the best time and so on together !

when we've got a minute to ourselves. It's time to go over to)I

the art-room now.' j!

They all went off to the art-room, Sally looking glum. Alicia j

slipped her arm in Darrell's and bore her off as if she really jI

was her best friend. Darrell glanced back at Sally and tried I

to take her arm away from Alicia. But Sally gave her such a sour look that Darrell was annoyed, and didn't go back to her after all. Privately Darrell thought the hour of Shakespeare was a dreadful waste, because it was a fine sunny afternoon when a game of lacrosse could have been arranged. Still it would be fun to see Zerelda trying to impress Miss Hibbert. Zerelda was excited. This was her great chance. If only she could bring it off—make Miss Hibbert say what a gift she was for acting she had. 'Zerelda, you're a born actress!' she would say to her. 'You have a great Gift. You must turn all your attention to building it up. You have the right appearance, too—striking, graceful, mature. It will make me very proud to teach you this year!' If, Zerelda had done a little roll of hair on top of her head again—not so big a roll as before, certainly, but still a roll, pinned up to make her look older. Her hair was not tied back so tightly either. She had made up her face a little—put red on her lips, pink on her cheeks, and had smothered herself with powder. Her hand

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long and highly polished. She hoped she looked a finished actress! Miss Hibbert did not look at all like a producer of plays. She was neat, with a well fitting coat and skirt, and her hair, slightly wavy, was brushed well back. She wore a hat. She looked over the girls as they came in. She knew Zerelda already because she had seen her in the play. Good gracious! What did the girl think she was up to! Miss Hibbert had absolutely no idea at all that Zerelda fancied herself as an actress. Nobody had told her. Perhaps if she had known, she might have been a little kinder. There was a lot to get through. For one reason or another two rehearsals had been skipped. 'Now—has anyone acted in this play before?' Nobody had. Zerelda stepped forward and said a few words, trying to speak the part. 'Oh,' said Miss Hibbert, gazing at Zerelda's hair. 'Zerelda. I don't like the way you are doing it. Zerelda went red and stepped back. 'Has anyone read the play?' Darrell and Mary-Lou put up their hands, and so did Zerelda. 'Does anyone know any of the parts? Has anyone been sufficiently interested to learn the parts?' Zerelda stepped forward again. 'Please, Miss Hibbert. I

AT THE REHEARSAL

know all Juliet's speeches, every one of them. I guess I could say them all, right?

'Yes. She's awfully good as Juliet,' put in Gwendoline, and got a grateful smile from her.

'Very well. As you've taken the trouble to learn the part, you can take it this afternoon. You'll be the former to take the part of Romeo. Her eye fell on Bill.

"You," she said. 'What's your name—Wilhelmina—

you can take the part of Romeo today. And you, Darrell, can be the nurse, and you'll be the nurse. Quickly she fitted part after part. The girls looked at their copies of the play and paged through them. 'Not very inspired,' said Miss Hibbert, after the first few pages had been read. 'Tell me, Zerelda, was she ready?' Why, she was waiting on tenterhooks to begin! She was full of it. Zerelda launched herself into the part. She declaimed her lines in a most dramatic manner. 'Stop, Zerelda,' said Miss Hibbert, amazed. But Zerelda did not stop. Heedless of the teacher's command, 'STOP, Zerelda!'

Zerelda stopped and stared blankly at Miss Hibbert, surprised to see that she looked so angry. 'How dare you behave like that?' stormed Miss Hibbert. 'Sending the class into fits—'

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AT THE REHEARSAL

but you have completely spoilt them. And do you really think it is clever to throw Zerelda took in what the angry mistress was saying. She could hardly believe it. 'And why have you made yourself up like that?' demanded Miss Hibbert, roused to Zerelda felt like a balloon that had been pricked. All her confidence and pride ooze. Rather subdued by this unusual outburst, the rest of the form went on with the rehearsal. 'Lou, you have a nice voice if you could remember to hold your head up when you sing.' 'Miss Hibbert, had I better go and see what has happened to Zerelda?' asked Gwen. 'I may give her a very small part—where she can't throw herself about,' said Miss Hibbert. 'But certainly not a good

and find her and tell her to come here to me. I want to talk to her. The class is now over. The third-formers went out quietly. Poor Zerelda! What would she do now? 'Put a bold face on it, I expect,' said Alicia. 'Just as she did when she was sent down.' 'Zerelda was found by Gwen in the cloakroom. She had washed her face quite clean in the cloakroom.

'Zerelda, Miss Hibbert wants you,' said Gwen. 'I'm sorry about that row. It's a shame.' 'Can't I act, Gwen?' said Zerelda, her lip quivering suddenly. Gwendoline hesitated. 'Well—you weren't very good really,' she said. 'You— you just seemed to be terribly funny. You might make a very good comedian, Zerelda said nothing but went off to the art-room. Even Gwen thought she couldn't act! In fact, she was so bad that she became a clown. But Miss Hibbert was unexpectedly kind, I hear that it is your ambition to be a great actress—and you haven't another thing that all really fine actresses need.'

'What?' whispered Zerelda.

'Well, Zerelda, in order to be able to put yourself properly into some other character—
-
forget your looks, your ambitions, your pride in acting, everything! And it takes a long time—
-
the finer the character of the actor, the better he can play any part. You are thinking

not Juliet being acted by Zerelda this afternoon—you were Zerelda all the time—and not a very nice Zerelda either!

'Shan't I ever be any good at acting?' asked Zerelda, miserably.

'I don't think so,' said Miss Hibbert, gently. 'I can always tell at once those who ha

stars blind you, Zerelda. Why not try to be your own self for a while? Stop all thi

'It's the only thing left for me to be,' said Zerelda, and a tear ran down her cheek.

'It's a very, very nice thing to be,' said Miss Hibbert. 'You try it and see! I wouldn

Zerelda left the art-

room, hardly knowing what to think. She had made herself ridiculous. She never,

She joined the others at tea, slipping into her place unnoticed by the girls. Miss P

—

a proper little schoolgirl. Perhaps Malory Towers is beginning to have an effect a

20 THE TRICK!

ONE or two days slipped by. Mavis was still very ill and could not be seen, but it

Bill had quite recovered from her midnight adventure and so had Darrell. Miss Pe

Zerelda had sorted things out in her mind. She had definitely given up the idea of

actress. She didn't even want to look like one! She wanted to look as like the othe

'Isn't Zerelda queer?' said Belinda to Irene. 'When she first came here she gave he

—now she tries to copy us in everything—

the way we speak, the way we do this and that—

and seems to think we're just "wunnerful!"

'She's much nicer,' said Irene, trying out the rhythm of a tune on the table in front

tum-ti-tum. Yes, that's how it goes. I like Zerelda now, really I do.'

'Look—

Gwendoline's scowling again!' said Belinda, in a whisper, 'i can get that scowl this

Gwen suddenly became aware of Belinda's intent glances. She straightened her fa

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'Oh, Gwen—

scowl half a minute more and I'll get it!' begged Belinda. But Gwen walked out of the room. 'About that trick,' said Alicia, suddenly to Darrell. 'Shall we play it on Friday? Mam'zelle said yes. Let's!' said Darrell, thrilled. She saw Sally nearby, her face glum. 'Sally! I'll do it—' —and quite harmless.'

'I've said already I'm not going to have anything to do with the trick,' said Sally. 'I don't agree!' —but just remember that I don't agree!'

'Spoil-

sport,' said Alicia, in a low voice to Darrell. Darrell sighed. She couldn't back out —but she did hate it when Sally wouldn't be friends. Never mind—

Betty would be coming back this week. On Friday perhaps! Then Alicia wouldn't — it was past half-term—

but she had been sent away to the seaside, after her whooping-

cough was over, because she had had it so badly. Good gracious—

there were only three or four weeks to the end of the term! How the time had flown! Alicia and Darrell made their plans. 'We'll put the little pellet, soaked in salt water —

who's on duty to get the room ready on Friday? Oh, I do believe it's you, isn't it, I

'Yes, I will.' agreed Darrell, beginning to giggle at the thought of Mam'zelle's surprise.

All the third-

formers knew about the joke. Only Sally disapproved. Jean didn't think there was

It came at last. Darrell slipped into the form room with the little pellet and a sponge.

The others came in to get ready for the class. They raised their eye-

brows at Darrell, and she nodded back, smiling. They all took their places, ready

She came in, beaming as usual. 'Asseyez-

vous, mes enfants. Today we have a great, great treat. It is a test!'

Deep groans from the class.

'Silence!' hissed Mam'zelle. 'Do you want Miss Potts to come and find out what is

She turned to write on the blackboard, and got the first whiff of the fine vapour, and

Mam'zelle felt a tickling in her nose, and felt about her plump person for her handkerchief to tickle.'

'Your hanky's in your belt, Mam'zelle,' called Alicia, hoping that Irene wasn't going to sneeze. Mam'zelle also looked as if she was bursting. She snatched at her handkerchief again—but this time it sounded like an explosive shell! 'A-WHOOSH-OOOO! Dear me,' said Mam'zelle,

'A-tish-oo!' sneezed poor Mam'zelle

THE TRICK!

patting her nose with her handkerchief. 'I'm sorry, girls, I could not help it.⁷
Irene had already bent down to hide her giggles under the desk. Alicia glanced at

—
it was coming. Mam'zelle was making a frantic grab for her handkerchief again. 'WHOOOSH-OOOOOOOO!'

Irene exploded and so did Belinda. Mam'zelle, quite shaken by her enormous sneeze, said 'Irene! Belinda! It is not kind to laugh at another's discom A-WHOOOSH-OOO!'

But now even Alicia could not hide her laughter. Darrell leaned back weakly and 'A-WHOOOSH-

OOO!' sneezed Mam'zelle again. She reeled back to her chair, and mopped her forehead. 'WHOOOOOSH-OOOOOOO!'

The last one was so terrific that it shook poor Mam'zelle right out of her chair. By the time Mam'zelle sat staring at the blackboard wondering if the sneezing had finished. P

—
but at once her nose began to tickle again and she put up her handkerchief. - A-WHOOOOOOOOOSH-OOO!'

Mam'zelle sank down into her chair again. At this moment the door opened and N

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happening?

She looked at Mam'zelle, and Mam'zelle looked back, trying to tell her what was going on. 'A-WHOOOSH-OOOOOOO!'

The class sobered up when they saw Miss Potts. They hoped she would go immediately

—
but she didn't. Rather alarmed at Mam'zelle's agonized expression, she went over to her. 'Mam'zelle began to explain and was then overcome by another.

The vapour found its way to Miss Potts' nose. She was just about to open her mouth. A-TISH-

OOO!' she sneezed, and Irene burst into one of her explosive laughs at once. Miss Potts said 'Irene! Do you think ... A-TISH-OOOO!'

'A-WHOOOOOSH-

OOOO!' from Mam'zelle. 'Miss Potts what is this snizzing? I cannot stop my snizzing. —A-WHOOSH-OOO!'

Miss Potts sneezed three times without being able to get a word in between the sniffs. 'Jean,' she said, 'you are head-girl of this form. Is this a trick? A-TISH-OO!'

Jean hesitated. How could she give the whole form away?

Mam'zelle saved her from further questioning. She sneezed such a mighty sneeze WHOOOOSH-OO.'

Really alarmed, Miss Potts, hindered by two or three sudden sneezes of her own, In great alarm Darrell opened the window and Mary-Lou

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ran for Matron. Matron came, puzzled by Mary-Lou's breathless tale of Mam'zell's sneezes. She saw Mam'zelle's pale face and too vapour overtook Matron also, and she did a very sudden sneeze indeed. Miss Potts. The girls, alarmed and frightened though they were, could not stop from laughing. 'I hope Mam'zelle isn't really knocked out,' said Darrell, anxiously. 'She did look So she threw it out, being caught for a sneeze herself first. Then the form settled. It was Miss Potts. 'Mam'zelle is not at all well,' she began, severely, handkerchief—very strange—

thing is, that as soon as we left this room not one of us had any wish to sneeze. Jean Alicia hardly knew what to say. Jean nudged her. 'Go on. You'll have to tell.' So Alicia told. It didn't seem nearly such a funny idea when it was told stammering. 'I see. One of your asinine tricks again. I should have thought that third-formers were above such childish things. Were you all in this, every one of you?'

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'Sally wasn't,' said Darrell. 'She refused to agree. She was the only one who stood. 'Only one sensible person in the whole of the form!' said Miss Potts. 'Very well—with the exception of Sally, each of you will forfeit the next half-holiday, which is I believe, on Thursday. You will also apologize to Mam'zelle and

21 MAVIS AND ZERELDA

IT was a sorry ending to what everyone had thought to be a very fine trick. 'I suppose Sally didn't say T told you so', which was very good of her, Darrell thought. 'I shall have my holiday just the same as you all do,' she told Darrell. T may have stood out against. 'You're decent, Sally,' said Darrell, slipping her arm in hers. 'Let's go downstairs and—sixth-formers against fifth-formers, all arguing their heads off.'

They went to find the noticeboard. One of the fourth-formers was also there, looking at it. It was Ellen. 'Hallo, Darrell!' she said. 'Congratulations?' 'What on?' asked Darrell, surprised.

'Well, look—you're playing for the third match-team next Thursday!' said Ellen. 'Three people have fallen out, ill—so all three reserves are playing—and you're one of them, aren't you?'

'Oh—how perfectly wizard!' cried Darrell. She capered round the hall—and then her face suddenly sobered. T say—

will Miss Potts let me play next Thursday? That's the half-holiday, isn't it, except for match-players? Oh, Sally—do you think I shan't be able to play because we've all got to give up our half-holiday and work instead?

'What are you talking about?' said Ellen, puzzled. Darrell told her.

'Goodness!' said Ellen. 'You won't be able to play then.'

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MAVIS AND ZERELDA

You can't expect Potty to let you off a punishment in order to have a great treat like a team.'

Darrell groaned. 'Oh—

what simply awful bad luck! My first chance! And I've chucked it away. Oh, Sally!

It was a terrible blow to poor Darrell. She went about looking so miserable that Sally

'Please, Miss Potts—Darrell is down to play in the third match-

team next Thursday,' said Sally. 'And because of the trick today she's supposed to

holiday because I didn't agree to the trick. Can I give it up, please, and let Darrell

'A kind thought, Sally, but quite impossible,' said Miss Potts. 'Darrell must take his

Sally went away sadly. She met Darrell and told her how she had tried to get her

holiday so that she might play in the team. Darrell was touched. 'Oh, Sally! You're

Sally smiled at her. Her jealousy slid away suddenly. She knew she had been silly

'I'll be glad when Betty's back and Alicia has her for company,' she said.

'So will I,' said Darrell, heartily. 'It's annoying the way she keeps trying to make me

Sally was satisfied. But how she wished she could give Darrell her half-

holiday! Poor Darrell it was such a wonderful chance—

one that might not come again for ages.

They met Sister and asked her for news of Mavis. 'Much better,' said Sister. 'Her

Darrell and Sally looked at each other in astonishment. Zerelda! Whatever did Miss

Mavis was very unhappy. She had been horrified when she found that her voice had

—won't I ever be able to sing again?' she had asked, anxiously.

'Not for some time,' Sister had said. 'Oh, yes, I expect it will come back all right,

—

but you have been very ill with throat and chest trouble, and you won't have to try

Mavis let the tears slide down her cheeks without wiping them away. No Voice! I

—and perhaps not then. Why, she might not become an opera-

singer after all. Throat trouble—chest trouble—

they were the two things a singer must always guard against.

'It's my own fault! Why did I creep off in the rain that night?' wept poor Mavis. 'I

—she's going to be a grand film-

actress, and she understands how a singer or an actress longs to be recognized, ac

So, when, Sister told her she could have a visitor and asked her whom she would Zerelda was surprised, too, to be chosen. She hadn't liked Mavis very much. But :

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She was shocked to see how thin Mavis looked. 'Sit down,' said Mavis, in a terrible voice. 'What's happened to your voice?' asked Zerelda, in alarm.

'I've lost it—

perhaps for ever!' said Mavis, in a pathetic croak. 'Oh, Zerelda, I've been an idiot. In a series of pants and croaks she told Zerelda all the happenings of that Saturday

—

and how they wouldn't even let her sing. 'So it was all for nothing. Oh, Zerelda, what a waste!' 'Don't talk any more, Mavis,' said Sister, putting her head in at the door. 'You talk too much.' So Zerelda talked. What did she find to talk about? Ah, Zerelda suddenly found a

—

she had especially learnt from her failure at acting. And she told Mavis all she had. It wasn't easy to tell what had happened in the Shakespeare class—

but when Zerelda saw how Mavis was drinking it all in, paying her the very close attention she deserved. 'So you see, Mavis,' she finished at last, 'I was much, much worse than you. You're not a schoolgirl—not future film-actresses or opera-

singers. You'll feel the same, too when you've thought about it. You can be you now. 'Oh, Zerelda,' croaked Mavis, slipping her hand into the American girl's, 'you don't

MAVIS AND ZERELDA

as well as to me!'

Zerelda said nothing. It had cost her a lot to make such a confession to Mavis, of hearted, and she had quickly seen how she, and she alone, could help Mavis.

Sister put her head in again. She was glad to see Mavis looking so much happier.

Mavis looked eagerly at Zerelda. 'Yes,' said Zerelda, firmly. 'We're friends.'

'Well, two minutes more and you must go,' said Sister and went out again.

'I'm going to make the other see that I wasn't only a Voice,' croaked Mavis. 'Zerelda—but you haven't got a friend, have you?'

'No,' said Zerelda, ashamed to say it. 'Well—'

I suppose I'm not much of a person either, Mavis. I'm just a no-account person—both of us are! We'll help each other. Now I must go. Good-bye! I'll come again tommorrow!'

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22 THINGS GET STRAIGHTENED OUT

MAM'ZELLE soon recovered from her fit of snizzes'. and returned to her teaching. But gradually her sense of humour came back to her and she found herself chuckling.

'But I, I snizzed the greatest snizzes,' said Mam'zelle to herself. 'Aha!—'

here is Mam'zelle Rougier. I will tell her of this trick.'

She told the prim, rather sour-

faced Mam'zelle Rougier who did not approve of tricks in any shape or form. She

'These English girls! Have you told Miss Grayling? They should all be punished,

'Oh no—'

I haven't reported them to the Head,' said Mam'zelle Dupont. 'I only do that for ser-

'And you do not call this a serious matter!' cried Mam'zelle Rougier. 'You will over— and the mad Irene and the bad Belinda—'

it would do them good to have a hard punishment.'

'Oh, they are all being punished,' said Mam'zelle, hastily. 'They are to give up the holiday and work instead.'

'That is no real punishment!' said Mam'zelle Rougier. 'You are poor at discipline,

'Indeed, I am not!' cried Mam'zelle Dupont, annoyed. 'Have you no sense of humour?'

'No, I do not,' said Mam'zelle Rougier, firmly. 'What is this "funny side" that the English have?'

The more that Mam'zelle Rougier talked like this the more certain Mam'zelle Dupuy became. She almost felt that she would like to remove the punishment Miss Potts had imposed. 'Perhaps not,' said Mam'zelle, a sudden idea coming into her head. 'The bad girls! That's better,' said Miss Potts, approvingly. She found Mam'zelle very difficult at first. 'I shall take them for a walk,' thought Mam'zelle. She hated walks herself, but she knew that Darrell saw a notice up on the board beside the list of players. 'MATCH CANCELLED!' 'Look at that!' she said to Sally. 'No match after all. How frightfully disappointed — and it was cancelled. I wonder if there's any hope of my playing on the next day.' The girls went to their classroom that afternoon, to work, while all the other forms

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Mam'zelle was waiting for them, a broad smile on her face. 'Poor children! You have been in surprise and glee the third-formers put back all the desks and chairs. They hoped Miss Potts would come by, on holiday! What sport to see their faces if they looked into the room! But Mam'zelle had made sure that both these mistresses would not come that way. 'The coast is bright!' said Mam'zelle, gleefully. The girls giggled. 'You mean, "the coast is bright"?' 'It is the same thing,' said Mam'zelle. 'Now — begin! Form a ring, please, and I will tell you what to sing as you go round to the desks.' It was a hilarious afternoon, and the third-formers enjoyed it very much. 'You're a sport, Mam'zelle,' said Darrell, warmly at last. Mam'zelle beamed. She had never yet been able to understand exactly what a 'sport' was — she only knew it was very high praise, and she was pleased. 'You made me snizz — and I have made you pant!' she said, to the breathless girls. 'We are evens, are we?' 'Quits, you mean,' said Jean, but Mam'zelle took no notice. 'I shall tell Miss Potts you have quite exhausted yourselves in your hard work this afternoon — you will be so hungry for tea!' Zerelda had enjoyed herself as much as anyone. In fact, she was very surprised to find that a week ago she would have turned up her nose at such rowdiness, and would only

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Zerelda joined in languidly, pretending it was all beneath her. 'But I loved every minute!' thought Zerelda, tying her hair back firmly. It had come down. She saw her old self suddenly — posing, trying to be so grown-up, piling up her hair in Lossie Laxton's terrible style, looking down on all these jolly girls. 'It's fun to be a proper schoolgirl,' she thought. 'Lovely to be just myself, instead of a snob — far worse than Mavis, who did at least have a real gift.'

Mavis was getting on well. She looked forward immensely to Zerelda's visits. Mavis's former friends had been to see her now, but she looked forward to Zerelda's visits more than

-

wonderful to have learnt a lesson that she, Mavis, meant to try to learn, too. It was—simpler, more natural, with a greater interest in other people.

'I'm never going to mention my voice again,' Mavis told Zerelda. 'I'm never going to be a singer' again. Perhaps if I'm sensible and don't boast and don't think about my voice—'Oh, it'll come back, I expect,' said Zerelda, comfortingly. 'You did your best to go on—you're just like me—'

reduced to being a schoolgirl and nothing else. But, gee, you wouldn't believe how I'm—'Tell me about Mam'zelle and the sneezing again,' begged

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Mavis. 'You do make me laugh so. You're terribly funny when you tell things like Zerelda was. She could not act any part, but she could tell a story in a very humor

—
but she wasn't going to say so! She wasn't going to give Zerelda any chance of this. The girls admired the way Zerelda gave her time so generously to Mavis. They thanked her off so well, and for taking to heart all she had said.

T didn't think she had it in her,' said Darrell to Sally. T really didn't. I thought she

—
and when Miss Hibbert pricked her, I thought she'd just deflate and there'd be not 'Well—

I always did think she was very generous, and I liked her good nature,' said Sally. —I didn't come back to school till so late.'

'I'm glad Betty's back, aren't you?' said Darrell. 'Thank goodness! Now Alicia has 'Well—

J don't mind making up a threesome with Bill sometimes,' said Sally. 'Though Bill —honestly I think Thunder takes the place of a friend with her.'

'Yes. He does,' said Darrell, remembering that dark rainy night when she and Bill So Bill, to her delight, was often taken in tow by Darrell

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and Sally. She thought the world of Darrell. 'One day I'll repay her for that night,' She was very happy now. Thunder was quite well. Darrell and Sally welcomed her. Bill was a simple person, straightforward, natural and very loyal. These things made mistress and Bill, delightful to them both.

'I'm so happy here,' said Bill to Darrell. 'I didn't want to come— but oh, I'm so glad I came!'

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THE term was coming to an end. Darrell as usual was torn in two over her feelings —but I do so love being at Malory Towers!' she said to Sally.

'Well, you're lucky to have both worlds,' said Sally. 'So am I. I love being at home —but I love school, too. It's been a good term, hasn't it, Darrell?'

'Yes,' said Darrell. 'I've only had one bitter disappointment —and that was, that after all the practising I've done, and all the extra coaching I got —I never played in the third match-team after all.'

'Did they play the match that was cancelled?' asked Sally. 'No. The other school had —

so there's no chance now. That's the only thing that has really spoilt the term a bit —and you being so late back, of course.'

'Isn't it a gorgeous afternoon?' said Sally, as they strolled out into the courtyard, a

'Let's go out to the lacrosse field,' said Darrell. 'It will be lovely there. I feel restless. Sally didn't really want to. She was not as good at games that term as usual, because of the holiday. 'All right. I'll get the sticks. You go and ask for a ball,' she said. They met again on the field. They were the only ones there. Molly Ronaldson, passing

by, smiled to see Darrell out there again. What a sticker she was! She really did so well. She called to Darrell. 'My goodness, you deserve to play well, Darrell! Have you —you know the match that was cancelled the half-

holiday Thursday? We thought we wouldn't be able to fix it up again —but Barchester have let us know that they can play us next Thursday —the day before we break up.'

'Oh, really?' said Darrell. 'Molly —

any chance of my being in the reserve three again? Do say yes!'

'Well, last time, apparently, you would have actually played in the match, as all the reserve players' holiday forfeited. So you wouldn't have been able to play after all.'

'Yes that's true,' said Darrell. 'But I haven't played the fool since. Put me in the reserve three.'

'True,' said Molly. 'Well, I shall be making a new list of match-

team players, and you may be in the reserve or you may not. I'm making no promises.'

'Isn't Molly marvellous!' said Darrell to Sally, her face in a glow as Molly walked

'Well—

I think she's very good as a games captain,' said Sally, who didn't get quite such v

—

you play well on Monday, when Molly's watching, and see if you can get in the r
So Darrell did. She was nimble and swift, she was deft at catching, unselfish in h

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being played there. She walked from one to another, sturdy, deliberate, her sharp
 That night the names of the girls in the third match-
 team were to be put up. The names of the reserve girls would be put below the tea
 list. Darrell hardly dared to go up to the noticeboard and look to see if her name v
 Surely it would be! Surely she had been better than most of the fourth-
 formers, and certainly far better than any other third-
 former! She glanced hopefully but fearfully at the names of the three reserves.
 Hers wasn't there! In real dismay Darrell read down the three reserve names again
 —her name was not there
 — not even as third reserve, which she had been before! Molly hadn't thought her
 Sally came running up. 'Darrell! Is your name down? Are you in the reserve?'
 Darrell shook her head. 'No,' she said 'Not this time. Oh, Sally-
 I'm awfully disappointed.'
 Sally was too. She slipped her arm through Darrell's. 'Bad luck, old thing. I am so
 'Oh well—I'm as bad as Zerelda used to be—
 imagining I'm good enough at lacrosse to be in the reserve for the Barchester mat
 'It doesn't, it doesn't!' said Sally. 'You ought to be at least//r,sY reserve—
 yes, you ought, Darrell. You are awfully good—super—
 at lacrosse. And you've practised so hard, too.'
 'Don't rub it in,' said Darrell, Sally's eager championship making her feel much wo
 room together. Mavis was there with Zerelda, for the first time.
 'Hallo, Mavis!' cried Sally, in surprise. T thought you

weren't coming to join us again till tomorrow. I'm so glad you're back.'
 'Welcome home again!' said Darrell, trying to forget her disappointment. 'I'm glad
 'Grand,' said Mavis, in her changed voice. She no longer had the deep, delightful
 but I did miss all the fun and noise of school.'
 She coughed. 'Don't talk too much all at once,' said Zerelda. 'You know Sister put
 —
 and I've got to deliver you well and healthy up to Matron tonight, before you are
 'I'll be all right,' said Mavis. 'Darrell—
 are you in the reserve? Zerelda said you were sure to be. I'm looking forward to s

'No. I'm not,' said Darrell, and turned away. Zerelda looked up, surprised and sorry.
'Gee, that's too bad,' she said, and then stopped as Sally frowned at her to stop her.
Darrell went out of the room. Sally didn't follow her, knowing that she wanted to go.
There came a clatter of feet down the corridor. The door burst open and the rest of

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'Yes. She's frightfully disappointed,' said Sally. The beaming third-formers looked immensely surprised.

'Disappointed!' echoed Alicia. 'Why? She ought to be so bucked that she's doing a' Now it was Sally's turn to be surprised. 'But why, you idiot? She's not even been j

'No—she hasn't—because, idiot, she's in the team itself!' cried Alicia.

'Yes. Actually in the team' said Bill, joyfully. 'Isn't it an honour?'

Sally gasped. 'Gracious! Darrell must just have looked at the names of the reserve—and not looked at the names in the team at all! How like her!'

'Where is she?' demanded Alicia, impatiently.

'Here she is!' yelled Belinda from the door. 'Darrell! Come here!'

Darrell came in, looking rather subdued. She gazed round in surprise at the excited formers. 'What's up?' she said.

'You are!' cried Irene slapping her on the back, 'Up on the noticeboard, silly! In the' Darrell didn't take it in. The others all crowded round her impatiently, talking at t

'You're in the TEAM! Don't you understand?'

'Not in the reserve. You're PLAYING on Thursday against Barchester.'

'Look at her—

quite dumb. Darrell! Do you mean to say you only looked at the names in the reserve team itself? Well, of all the donkeys!'

Light suddenly dawned upon Darrell. She seized Alicia's wrists joyfully. 'Alicia! —I never thought of looking there.'

Then there was so much shouting and congratulating and rejoicing that Matron ca

Mavis was standing it very well. She was smacking Darrell on the back and calling Matron went out again without being noticed. She smiled to herself. 'All because —what a thing it is to be a schoolgirl!'

It was a lovely thing to Darrell at that moment. She thought she had never been so —

just when she had felt so disappointed and miserable, too! She was almost in tears. She could hardly wait till Thursday came—but it dawned at last, sunny and clear —

the ideal day for a match. It was a home match, and as it was the day before break

Darrell was nervous. She was cross with herself for this, but she couldn't help it. I
fright? Wait till you're on the field—you'll soon forget it!

Molly was right. Once on the field, with her lacrosse stick in her hands, dancing a
—probably she could run even faster than Darrell!

She certainly could run very fast and she was powerful too, getting the ball from
'Play up, Darrell! Play up!' yelled the watching third-

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formers, every time Darrell got the ball and sped off with it. 'Oh, well passed! Oh Goal to Barchester. Goal to Malory Towers. Half-time. One all. Slices of sour lemon being brought out on plates. And here was Molly. 'Darrell! You're tiring the other girl out nicely. She's good, but she gets winded m 'Yes. Yes, Molly,' said Darrell, almost swallowing her slice of lemon in her eager —I think my opponent's tiring. I can out-run her. I'll do what you say if I can. Tell Catherine.'

'I have,' said Molly. 'Now— there's the whistle. You're all doing well. But I think it will have to be you who do Molly went off the field. A chorus went up from the watchers 'PLAY—UP— Malory TOWERS! PLAY—UP-Malory TOWERS!'

And Malory Towers played up. Darrell and Catherine passed beautifully to one another. —UP—Malory TOWERS!'

Darrell felt the time slipping by. Two goals all—

Malory Towers must shoot again before time was up. She took a fine pass, and ran. 'Go it, DARRELL! SHOOT! SHOOT!' yelled everyone but Darrell was too far from

the ground. Then down the field rushed the Barchester wing, back towards the Malory Towers. But there the goal-

keeper stopped it valiantly. Hurrah! Saved again! Up the field came the ball again. 'Go it, DARRELL!' yelled the onlookers. Darrell ran towards the Barchester goal. She threw. It was a clumsy throw, but Darrell ran to catch the ball. Once in her net. 'SHOOT! SHOOT! SHOOT!'

And Darrell shot. She threw the ball with all her might at the goal. The Barchester keeper came out to stop it. The ball struck her pad, then struck the goal-post—and rolled to the back of the net.

'GOAL!' What a cry went up. 'Jolly good, Darrell! Fine shot! Hurrah! Three goals! Almost immediately the whistle blew for time. The two teams lined up and cheered. Molly she had shot the winning goal!

'Well played, young Darrell!' said Molly's voice. 'You did well. That was a very fine shot. Darrell went off to the big tea provided for the two match-teams, her heart singing. This was a great moment for her. The third-

formers all crowded round her, clapping her on the shoulder, praising her, delight
Darrell was very tired and very happy that evening. What would her father and m

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she told them all this? Thank goodness she was seeing them tomorrow, and they
All the third-

formers shared in Darrell's delight. They cheered her when she came into the cor-
room, and she stood there blushing and embarrassed.

'Good old Darrell! So modest she didn't even think of looking in the team-
list for her own name—

and so marvellous that she shoots the winning goal!' cried Irene, and thumped Da
The last day come. All the packing was done, except for a few things that the car-
girls were bundling into their cars at the last minute. Good-

byes were said. Addresses were exchanged and immediately lost. Matron tried to
'Bill! Good heavens! Here are all your brothers again!' yelled Darrell. But Bill wa
'You've come to fetch me! Look at Thunder! Isn't he in good condition? Get up, T
The train-

girls went, and there was a little peace. Irene wandered round lamenting that som
book and pencil.

'Gwen! It's my last chance! Let me sketch that scowl!'

Darrell laughed. How like Belinda to do that when her mother and father were wa

Zerelda popped up to say good-

bye. How different she looked now from when she came. She wore her school ha
—a thing she had said she would never do! 'Good-

bye,' she said. 'See you again next term. It's been wunnerful here. I'm glad I came
—and gee, I'm glad I'm coming back!'

'Good-

bye!' croaked Mavis, waving to everyone as she climbed into her car. 'See you ne
Bill galloped off with her brothers, calling a mad good-bye. Mam'zelle Dupont w
Darrell giggled. Belinda came by with a wooden box of bath salts she had sudden
A green powder covered the hall, and a green cloud rose up into the air, with a ve
'Now, Belinda, I...' began Mam'zelle, and then paused with her mouth wide open.
'A-WHOOOOOSH-OOOOOOO!'

'Good gracious!' said Miss Potts, startled. T never knew anyone sn...'

'A-Whooooooo—' began Mam'zelle again and Miss Potts ran for shelter.

Darrell and Sally giggled helplessly. They remembered the afternoon of the Trick 'Now sneeze, Mam'zelle!' she cried, holding the umbrella over Miss Potts and Miss Darrell's mother, coming up the steps in search of her,

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was amazed to see this sight. Darrell flung away the umbrella joyfully and sprang bye Mam'zelle, good-bye, Potty, good-bye Miss P., good-bye Matron. See you all next term! This has been a SUPER term!

'Good-bye!' said Matron. 'Be good.'

'Good-

bye!' said Miss Potts and Miss Peters together. 'Remember your hoi iday reading 'A-Whooooosh-

ooooo!' said Mam'zelle, and ran forward to wave. Gwen just saved her from falling.

The car drove off. Darrell waved frantically till they were out of the front gates. 'I

'Mother! Daddy! What DO you think? I played in the third match-

team yesterday against Barchester School—

and I scored the winning goal. Mother, I—'

Sally listened contentedly. Good old Darrell! She had had a lovely term and enjoyed —and the autumn term— and the winter term—oh, terms and terms and terms!

'Here's the last glimpse of Malory Towers, Darrell,' said Sally, suddenly. Darrell (

'I'll soon be back, Malory Towers!' she called 'Good-bye for a little while. I'll see

The End.

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